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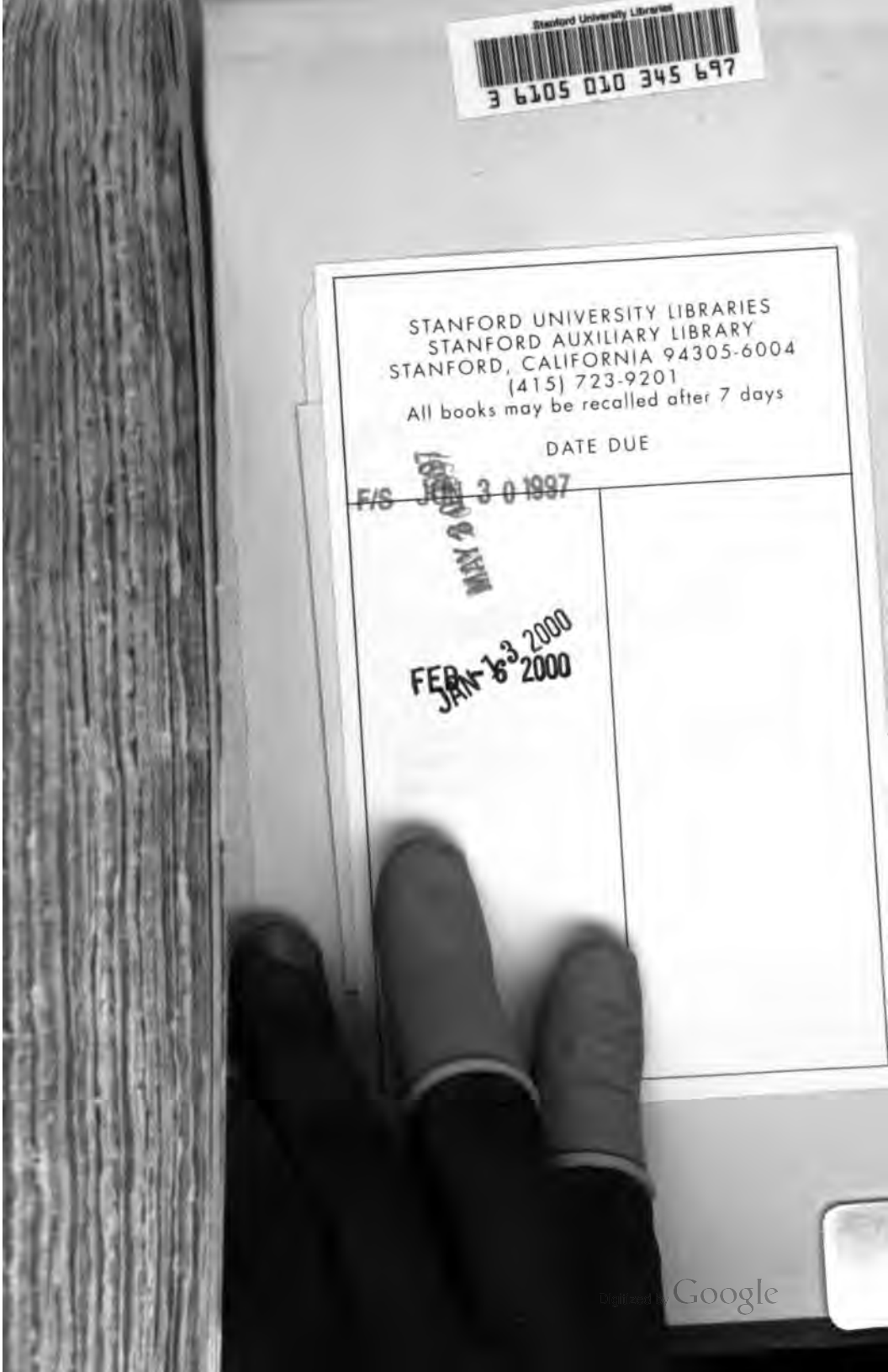
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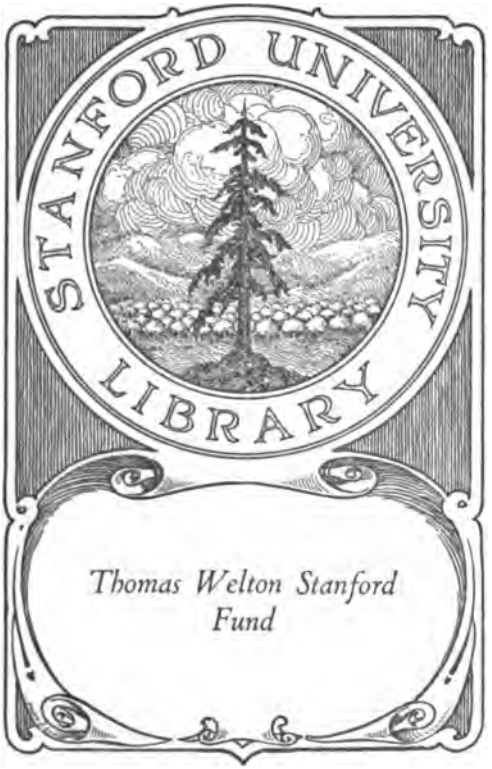

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MODERN SPIRITUALISM

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MODERN SPIRITUALISM

A HISTORY AND A CRITICISM

BY

FRANK PODMORE

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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PREFACE

MY chief amongst many and weighty obligations for help and counsel given is to Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, who kindly placed at my disposal the material collected for her article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on "Spiritualism." At a later stage Mrs. Sidgwick read a great part of the following pages in typescript, and gave me many valuable suggestions. To the late Henry Sidgwick I am indebted for some wise counsel in the writing of the earlier part of this work; that I could not submit to his clear judgment some of the delicate questions dealt with in the last Book I regard as an irremediable loss.

To Dr. R. Hodgson also I owe much. Alike by natural endowment and by his unrivalled experience, Dr. Hodgson is probably better qualified than any living person to deal critically with the history of Spiritualism; nor did I venture to set about the present work until I had ascertained that he was not prepared to undertake the task himself. I had hoped, however, that he would have been able to contribute to the book his own version of his investigations in slate-writing, and an account of the Eusapia séances, with his own criticisms. Pressure of other work prevented the fulfilment of this scheme; but my own account of these matters is based, as the reader will see, almost exclusively on Dr. Hodgson's writings, supplemented by his criticisms and suggestions on the completed chapters.

Not to Dr. Hodgson alone, but also to the late Frederic Myers, I, in common with all others who are engaged on the investigation of these obscure and widely neglected problems, am indebted not only for much of the material used, but for the means of using it.

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I have ventured to dissent from some of the conclusions formed by these writers, each of whom can claim a wider experience and a more intimate first-hand knowledge of some, and not the least important, aspects of the case. In the very act of combating their views I am forced to rely upon weapons which they have helped to forge. I gladly acknowledge the debt.

To other colleagues and friends who have helped me in various ways I tender my cordial thanks; and especially to Mr. Dawson Rogers and the Council of the London Spiritualist Alliance, who have placed unreservedly at my disposal the valuable collection of books included in their library. I am the more sensible of my obligations in this particular instance, seeing that the Council cannot but have been aware that my views differed widely from their own. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* I have tried to profit by the example of tolerance and fair play set by my adversaries in the argument.

F. P.

July, 1902.

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INTRODUCTION

THE system of beliefs known as Modern Spiritualism[1]—a system which in one aspect is a religious faith, in another claims to represent a new department of natural science—is based on the interpretation of certain obscure facts as indicating the agency of the spirits of dead men and women. The primary aim of the present work is to provide the necessary data for determining how far, if at all, that interpretation of the facts is justified. But the question, Is the belief justified? cannot, as the whole history of mysticism stands to prove, be finally answered until we are prepared with a more or less adequate answer to two subsidiary questions: first, If not justified, what is the true interpretation of the facts? and, second, How can the origin and persistence of the false interpretation be explained?

As supplementary, therefore, to the purely evidential aspect of the inquiry, it became necessary to give some account, on the one hand, of the contemporary history of the movement, and of its social and intellectual environment, and, on the other hand, of the prior systems of belief from which it sprang. For the modern belief in Spirit-intercourse is not,

[1] There is, of course, a certain ambiguity involved in the use of the word "Spiritualism," since that term has been commonly employed, both before and since 1848, to denote a system of philosophy, or more strictly perhaps a philosophical attitude. But whilst in philosophy the connotation of the term is somewhat vague, and there are, moreover, sufficient synonyms to admit of the word being dispensed with, in the alternative sense in which it is employed throughout this book, viz. the belief in intercourse with the spirits of the dead, the meaning is well defined, and no other term in common use will meet the requirements. The only practicable alternative, short of introducing a new word, is to employ "Spiritism"; but "Spiritism" outside France has never won general recognition. Moreover, it is frequently applied by Spiritualists in this country to denote one particular form of their belief, the doctrine of reincarnation associated with the name of Allan Kardec.

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of course, a mere accident of the time. It cannot but be recognised, whatever bearings such an admission may have upon its intrinsic truth or falsity, that the belief in its present form is an organic outgrowth from previous forms of mysticism. Historically, if not also logically, it is the necessary consequent of well-ascertained antecedents.

In 1871 the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, in presenting the results of a prolonged inquiry into the phenomena of Spiritualism, reported that while they were overwhelmed with testimony from believers in the alleged marvels, their appeal had elicited hardly any response from the more numerous body of persons who held the belief to be based upon fraud and delusion.[1] The Committee's experience is typical of the whole history of Spiritualism up to the present time. Within the last fifty years there have been throughout the civilised world scores of periodicals devoted to the propaganda; hundreds, perhaps thousands, of volumes have been published representing the views either of those who have accepted the Spiritualist creed as a whole, or of the minority who, after more or less prolonged investigation, have found themselves unable indeed to pronounce judgment on their ultimate implications, yet convinced of the genuineness of some of the alleged manifestations.

The other side is represented at most by a few score of books, pamphlets, and magazine articles, not one of which can be said to have considered the movement as a whole, or to have discussed the evidence at its strongest. Amongst the more obvious reasons for a neglect, which may well have seemed judicious, one in particular must be mentioned here. There can be no doubt that in each succeeding decade those who, with or without adequate inquiry, had satisfied themselves that the alleged physical marvels at any rate were baseless, were satisfied equally that within a short time the belief in them would die out of itself, and that to treat the matter seriously might even tend to postpone that desired end.

Those expectations have not yet been fulfilled. Ten years ago, indeed, it might have been said with some confidence

[1] *Report on Spiritualism*, p. 1.

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that the movement was tending rapidly to decay; that alike in this country and abroad there was less widespread interest in the subject amongst the educated classes than at any period since 1860; that physical mediums and manifestations were less striking and abundant; and that the ranks of avowed Spiritualists showed a decline, not so marked perhaps in the actual numbers as in the intellectual standing of the recruits.

But within the last decade the strongest evidence adduced in the whole history of the movement for the belief in communion with the dead has been furnished by the trance-utterances of Mrs. Piper, as interpreted in Dr. Hodgson's Report;[1] whilst within the same period the physical manifestations occurring in the presence of an Italian medium, Eusapia Paladino, have seemed, and still seem to many persons of eminence in this country and on the Continent, worthy of consideration as testifying to the probable operation of forces unknown to science. That men of such distinction in various fields of thought as Sir Oliver Lodge, the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers, Dr. Hodgson, Professor William James, of Harvard, and Professor Charles Richet, of Paris, should have been strongly affected, and in some cases actually convinced by the new evidence, whilst older converts like Sir W. Crookes and Dr. A. R. Wallace maintain their belief unimpaired, is proof sufficient that the movement, if on the decline, is visibly still far from its euthanasia, and may at any moment receive fresh accessions of strength with the discovery of new mediums or new forms of manifestation.

Whether the belief in the intercourse with spirits is well founded or not, it is certain that no critic has yet succeeded in demonstrating the inadequacy of the evidence upon which the Spiritualists rely. That evidence groups itself into two distinct categories; and in some cases those who accept the one category reject wholly or in part facts coming under the other. In the first place we have to consider certain subconscious activities manifesting themselves in trance speaking, automatic writing, seeing of visions, which though they may be readily counterfeited, are not necessarily, or in typical

[1] *Proc. Soc. for Psychical Research*, vol. xiii. pp. 284–582.

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cases, associated with imposture. In the second place, second in the historical as in the logical order, there are certain physical manifestations, unquestionably, in their later developments, bearing strong resemblance to conjuring tricks, but as unquestionably appearing in the first instance in the presence and through the agency of uneducated and unskilled persons, mostly young children, and in circumstances where the hypothesis of trickery presents formidable moral as well as physical difficulties.

At the outset of our inquiry we must note a significant distinction between the two classes of phenomena. With the exception of one well-defined type of cases—to be considered in detail in the next two chapters—there is, broadly speaking, no parallel to be found in civilised countries, during the last three or four centuries at least, for the physical phenomena alleged to occur in the presence of certain Spiritualist mediums. On the other hand, the annals of Spiritualism contribute nothing new as regards the first class. There is no manifestation of inspired writing and speaking, of spiritual healing, of telepathy, or clairvoyance, occurring since 1848, which cannot be matched amongst the records of Animal Magnetism; and again, before Mesmer, we meet with similar phenomena in the chronicles of ecstasy, obsession, magic, and witchcraft.

Historically, moreover, Spiritualism is the direct outgrowth of Animal Magnetism. In America, the land of its birth —according to the common reckoning, which dates the movement in its present shape from the rappings of 1848 —the embryo faith was incubated in the revelations of a "magnetic" clairvoyant, and its first apostles were drawn mainly from the ranks of those who had studied and practised Animal Magnetism, or attended clairvoyant séances. Moreover, not in America only, but in the older civilisations generally, there were many who had adopted, long before 1848, the spiritualistic interpretation of the phenomena of the "magnetic" trance.

For the proper understanding of the subject it is essential to note that the recognition of the trance phenomena, as testifying to the existence of a spiritual world, preceded the

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acceptance of the physical manifestations as signs and wonders vouchsafed from that world. The raps and movements of tables did not, in the ultimate analysis, originate anything; they served merely to confirm a pre-existing belief. It is, no doubt, amongst other causes, primarily because of the failure to recognise this historical sequence that most attempts to demonstrate the falsity of the Spiritualist belief have proved ineffectual. It was of little use for the American doctors to prove that the raps could be produced by cracking of the joints, or Faraday that tables could be turned by unconscious muscular action alone; for Maskelyne to imitate the rope-tying feats of the Davenport Brothers; or for hardy investigators at a later date to seize the spirit form at a dark séance. Alike in the larger historical cycle, and in the sequence of each individual experience, the faith in Spiritualism was buttressed by these things, not based on them; and though shaken, could not be permanently overthrown by any demonstration of their futility. Some, indeed, like Braid and Carpenter, approached the subject from the other side, and attempted to show that not only the physical movements, but the visions, inspired writing and speaking, could be traced to such recognised, if insufficiently familiar, causes as automatism and hallucination. If these attempts also met with no substantial success, it was apparently because the analysis did not go deep enough, and especially because it failed to take adequate account of those rarer and more dubious phenomena of the trance, which were interpreted by believers either as indications of new faculty or as tokens of a new world of being.

On various grounds, therefore, it seemed essential to preface the detailed account of the movement since 1848 with a sketch of earlier mystical beliefs and especially of the cult of Animal Magnetism in America and Europe. And for other reasons a brief history of Animal Magnetism seemed germane to the present inquiry. The more striking phenomena of the induced trance and of automatism, such as suggestional anæsthesia, hallucination, catalepsy, involuntary speaking and writing, are now, it may be presumed, fairly established.

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But it must not be overlooked that it is only within the last generation, almost, it may be said, within the last decade, that these phenomena have come to be recognised as genuine accompaniments of a genuine if still obscure cerebral condition. They have occurred sporadically for centuries; and since the last quarter of the eighteenth century they have been reproduced experimentally in every civilised country; they have been studied by more or less trained observers; they have been recorded, in bewildering variety, in innumerable treatises; and have yet failed until yesterday, not merely to secure a favourable verdict, but even to gain entrance to the Court of Science. The history of Animal Magnetism affords a most striking illustration of that dichotomy of opinion which seems, at a certain stage, to be the inevitable condition of the growth of knowledge. For more than three generations such part of the instructed world as took any note of the phenomena which we have now learnt to call hypnotic were divided into two sharply opposed camps. On the one side were those who believed in the phenomena and a good deal more, and ascribed them to the operation of a subtle fluid; in the other and larger camp were those who rejected them as merely the results of mal-observation, when they did not actually stigmatise them as fraudulent. And, precisely as in the process of organic evolution, all forms of belief intermediate between these two extremes tended to extinction and oblivion.

To us, looking back over the past century, two names stand out prominently in the early history of Animal Magnetism. Bertrand in France and Braid in England separated themselves from all their contemporaries by accepting the phenomena in general as genuine, whilst attempting to relate them to the known facts of physiology. It is instructive to note what manner of treatment they met with from those contemporaries. Bertrand, it may be said, died too young for fame; but the indifference shown to Braid's remarkable work is one of the most singular episodes in the history of science. That the medical authorities of his day turned a deaf ear to his enunciation, a generation before Bernheim and the Nancy School, of an explanation essentially the same as the modern

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theory of suggestion, is matter of common knowledge; it is probably not so well known that, despite his endorsement of the genuineness of most of the phenomena, including those of Phreno-Mesmerism, his writings and his very existence were almost completely ignored by those who, like him, believed in the facts. No contribution from Braid, nor any review of his numerous writings, appears in the *Zoist;* and the whole thirteen volumes of that periodical contain but two or three contemptuous references to his views. Nature, it may be said, abhors a Mugwump.

Now this recent episode in the history of science has a direct bearing upon one of the problems presented to us by Modern Spiritualism. Side by side with the now admitted manifestations of automatic activity, which, as said, form the bulk of the psychological phenomena, there have been found from very early times, and more abundantly perhaps in the records of Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism, facts which seem to indicate some mode of perception, or some form of communication between mind and mind, as yet unrecognised. It would be difficult to maintain that these indications are as clear and unmistakable as the evidence for the establishment by suggestion of a state of complete insensibility to pain. But the recollection that fifty years ago the medical profession and the leaders of science generally were practically unanimous in rejecting the evidence for the one class of facts accumulated by the demonstrations of Esdaile and others is full of encouragement for those of us who now are inclined to think that the case for thought-transference has not yet had a fair hearing. But the exponents of mesmeric anæsthesia were with one or two exceptions tainted with theories of a mystical character; Elliotson and Esdaile believed, on evidence which we can now see to have been quite insufficient, in the operation of an invisible fluid emanating from the magnet and other bodies; and their medical contemporaries felt themselves thereby absolved from any inquiry into the alleged anæsthesia. In the modern case of thought-transference, the grounds alleged for an indifference, which, it must be admitted, is neither so marked

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nor so unanimous, are similar, but without equal justification. For the modern belief in the possibility of a new mode of perception is not necessarily associated with any mystical or transcendental doctrine; and, indeed, if fairly examined, will be found the most effectual solvent of all mystical beliefs, for it furnishes a rationalist explanation of phenomena hitherto commonly interpreted, by those who found themselves forced to admit the facts, as due to the interference of spiritual agencies. For my own part, at any rate, I see no reason to doubt that, if the existence of thought-transference should eventually be demonstrated—and I do not claim that the demonstration is or ought to be considered at present complete—the explanation will be found to lie strictly within the region of natural law. To assist in the elucidation of this particular question, which is, to my thinking, the key to some of the most perplexing problems of Spiritualism, I shall endeavour in the course of the present work to present, as fully as practicable, examples of the experiments and observations which seem to point to some faculty of the kind supposed. It must be admitted that the older evidence is far from demonstrative; possibly, apart from two recent items—the experiments at Brighton conducted by Professor and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, and the records of Mrs. Piper's trance utterances—the question of the reality of such a faculty would hardly seem worth discussion. But the existence of the recent evidence gives a retrospective importance to all the scattered hints which we meet with in the literature of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism, and makes the presentation of records of mesmeric clairvoyance and of experiments in community of sensation, in themselves not sufficiently impressive, seem worth the pains.

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MODERN SPIRITUALISM

BOOK I

THE PEDIGREE OF SPIRITUALISM

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THE PEDIGREE OF SPIRITUALISM

CHAPTER I

POSSESSION AND WITCHCRAFT

THE belief in the overshadowing presence and continual intervention of spiritual beings underlay, it need hardly be said, the whole of the popular thinking and much of the philosophy of the Middle Ages. But this belief differed widely from the Spiritualism of to-day. The later alchemists, such as Paracelsus and some contemporary and succeeding mystics, believed, indeed, in the agency of immaterial beings, but for the most part of a non-human and non-moral order. The spirits which intervened in mortal affairs were in their view parasitical on mankind, or even mere temporary products of man's misdirected spiritual energies. Spiritual entities never formed the mainspring of the alchemical philosophy; and by the chief followers of Paracelsus in this country in the seventeenth century their agency, as will be shown in a later chapter, appears to have been practically discarded. Again, amongst the unlearned generally, in ecclesiastical societies, and even with many who represented the best culture of their time, belief in the active intervention of angels and devils continued to exert a powerful influence down even to the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, In all matters the belief in spiritual presences still counted for much; the unfamiliar and mysterious were referred to such agencies as naturally as in recent times they have been referred by the ignorant to electricity. But these supposed beings, diabolic or, on occasion, divine in their nature, were not identified with the spirits of deceased men and women. Though accessible to human prayers or threats, and conversant with human speech, they stood outside and apart from the human order.

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Amongst the phenomena which down even to the eighteenth century have been commonly held to indicate such spiritual operation, the most notable are those outbreaks of spontaneous trance, ecstasy, and speaking with tongues which have from time to time appeared like an epidemic in religious communities of various denominations. One of the most famous epidemics of the kind in comparatively recent times is that of the Ursuline Nuns of Loudun in 1632–4. Urbain Grandier, a curé of Loudun, had been accused of grave immorality; but whether because he boasted powerful friends, or because he was innocent, his accusers had so far failed to procure his conviction. But in 1632 there broke out in a convent in the town—a convent to which Grandier had unsuccessfully sought to be appointed spiritual director—a singular epidemic. Several of the nuns, including the Mother Superior, were seized, now with violent convulsions, now with symptoms of catalepsy—rigidity, insensibility to pain, etc.—or again, in a state of ecstasy poured forth all manner of blasphemies and obscenities. Naturally in those days it was held that they were bewitched; and, indeed, the devils confessed themselves through the mouths of their victims. Various ecclesiastical and judicial inquiries were held, and in the sequel the hapless Grandier, whom all the possessed indicated as the author of their troubles, was burnt alive in April, 1634. The feature of the epidemic which is of special interest for our present purpose, is that the possessed persons were commonly reported to speak in foreign tongues—a faculty which, as is well known, is one of the four principal signs of the presence of a demon. The anonymous author of the earliest history of the outbreak[1] has as little doubt of the reality of the portent as he has of the guilt of Grandier. He cites the testimony of a doctor of the Sorbonne and other prominent personages to the effect that the devils understood questions put to them in Latin, Greek, Turkish, Spanish, a Red Indian language, and so on, and in many cases made answer in the same tongues. But he does not write from first-hand knowledge; he gives no authority for his statements, and his testimony in any case is vitiated by his theological bias. From a much later work, also anonymous,[2] written from a Protestant standpoint, we have details of some of the actual examinations. From these it appears that some of the nuns, chiefly the Mother Superior, did

[1] *La Veritable Histoire des Diables de Loudun . . . par un Temoin, à Poitiers.* 1634. Translated and edited by Edmund Goldsmid. London, 1887.
[2] *Histoire des Diables de Loudun.* Amsterdam, 1693.

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indeed answer in Latin the remarks addressed to them in that language, but that their answers were frequently incorrect, causing the bystanders to comment on the bad Latinity of the demon. Thus, when exhorted, *Adora Deum tuum*, the nun replied to her interlocutor, *Adoro te*.[1] On another occasion, when asked *Quoties* she replied as if the question had been *quando*,[2] and exclaimed *Deus non volo* when she meant *Deus non vult*.[3] Or again, if the question proved too difficult, she constantly evaded a reply by exclaiming, *Nimia curiositas*. The Mother Superior further excused herself from replying in Greek, on the ground that there was a pact between the demon and Grandier not to speak in that language.[4] Of other foreign languages we hear nothing at all.

There seems no need to adopt the hypothesis of the later historian that the nuns had been coached up by Grandier's enemies, and had learnt their lesson badly; such little knowledge of Latin as they betrayed could probably, as suggested by Bertrand, have been picked up from constantly attending the offices of the Church. It is noteworthy that various witnesses credited the possessed with the power to read the thoughts of those present and to respond to mental questions.[5]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century similar phenomena, but attributed by the subjects to celestial inspiration, occurred amongst the persecuted peasantry of the Cevennes. Many of them fled to England, and their recitals were collected and published in London in 1707.[6] The symptoms of this epidemic possession in the most marked cases were very similar to those observed amongst the nuns of Loudun; to wit, convulsions, rigidity, insensibility to pain, and loss of consciousness. These alternated with an ecstasy, in which the subjects spoke fluently and with authority as if inspired, preaching good works, repentance, and salvation. The utterances appear generally to have been couched in excellent French, whereas to the natives of the Cevennes, as I can testify from personal experience, French is to this day a foreign language. Thus Jean Vernet writes that his mother, under the inspiration, talked in French for the first time in her life.[7] An idiot shepherd boy expressed himself fluently in good French;[8] nay, an infant fourteen months old was heard by one witness to speak from the cradle and exhort his

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 57. [2] Page 129. [3] Page 65. [4] Page 163.
[5] In addition to the writers already cited, see Bertrand, *Du Magnétisme Animal*, p. 336, etc., and *Traité du Somnambulisme*, p. 328, and *Bibliothèque du Magnétisme Animal*, tom. iv. pp. 83–5.
[6] *Le Théâtre Sacré des Cevennes.*
[7] *Op cit.*, p. 14. [8] Page 31.

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hearers to repentance.[1] Many persons who were unable to read are said to have quoted long passages of Scripture as if they knew the Bible by heart.

Manifestations of this kind are no doubt to be explained, due allowance being made for exaggeration on the part of the reporter, by that extraordinary exaltation of memory which we shall later have occasion to note as a frequent accompaniment of the trance. A single illustration may be given. The following is extracted from an address given under inspiration by Elie Marion, an unlettered peasant, unable in his ordinary state to speak French.[2]

"En vérité, mon enfant, je viens payer ces villes abominables qui répandent le sang de mes enfans; je m'en vais au premier jour, les détruire entièrement. Ma colère m'embrace tous les jours contre ces peuples rebelles à mes commandemens. Sache que j'ai la verge en main, et qu'elle ne s'en retirera point qu'elle n'ait frappé entièrement la terre et ses abominations. Je vengerai mes enfans, ma cause; votre sang sera vengé, mes enfans, vous sortirez de la poussière, mon peuple. Je vous éleverai sur des trônes, je mettrai ma force en Sion. Sache que j'y viens faire ma demeure éternelle dans peu de jours. C'est la forteresse de l'éternel, ton Dieu, qui doit défendre son peuple d'entre les mains du diable du monde. Les oiseaux de proie, dans peu de jours se repaîtront des choses abominables de la terre, je m'en vais leur liverer l'impudicité du monde. Le ravage qui sera fait sur la terre par mes exécuteurs sera terrible. Sache qu'il y aura un carnage horrible. Le sang découlera de tous côtés sans que personne l'arrête. Faut que la terre s'enivre du sang impur du monde.

The alleged power to discern the thoughts of men's hearts manifested itself chiefly in the detection of spies, who frequently attended the meetings of the proscribed devotees. Of the exercise of the power in other directions there are few traces; and the speaking in "unknown tongues" appears to have consisted in the fact that some of the ecstatics occasionally poured forth sounds unintelligible to their hearers, which they afterwards themselves translated under the same inspiration.[3]

Similar phenomena are said to have been witnessed amongst some of the votaries who crowded round the tomb of the Jansenist Deacon Paris, in 1730 and onwards—the Convulsionaries of St. Medard, as they came to be known.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

[2] *Traité du Somnambulisme*, pp. 307–8. Bertrand does not say from what source the quotation is taken. The testimony of Elie Marion is printed in *Le Théâtre Sacré*, but I cannot find this speech recorded there.

[3] *Le Théâtre Sacré*, p. 37.

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Insensibility to pain, even the pain of burning, and to severe blows and other ill-treatment was repeatedly demonstrated. The ecstatics frequently preached under inspiration, and are commonly reported to have spoken in Greek, Latin, and other languages, which they had never learnt, and occasionally in unknown tongues. The evidence, again, for the speaking in *recognised* foreign languages is defective; but there seems to have been no question that the ecstatics did occasionally pour forth unintelligible sounds, which the bystanders assumed to represent utterances in an unknown tongue. Here is an account given by a witness of one of these outpourings, the ecstatic in this case being the Chevalier Folard: "Il se met tout à coup à parler par monosyllabes; c'est un baragouin où personne n'entend goutte. Quelquesuns disent qu'il parle alors la langue esclavone; mais je crois que personne n'y entend rien."[1]

The most recent and perhaps the most instructive outbreak of the kind occurred just a century later in London. The speaking with tongues in Edward Irving's congregation began in 1831. Irving himself seems, indeed, for some years to have believed in and looked for an outpouring of spiritual gifts, such as is described in the Acts as having taken place amongst the early Christians. This belief and expectation were raised to an acute point with him and some of his more prominent followers by the outbreak, in 1830, amongst some pious Scotch peasants, of speaking with tongues and apparently miraculous gifts of healing. In the course of the following year, at a time when grave ecclesiastical troubles were impending over the minister and his congregation, he instituted a series of services in his church at 6.30 a.m., and there prayer was offered up day after day for the bestowal of the miraculous gifts which the worshippers held had been promised to the Church. At last, in July, 1831, expectation was fulfilled, and one after another of the little band of believers began to speak with tongues. It was not, indeed, without hesitation that the manifestations were accepted by Irving himself as supernatural, still less as divine. But seeing that those who spoke were true believers and persons of honest and good life, and that their utterances conformed in all things to the Christian Faith which he himself held, Irving, after some weeks of doubt and trial, yielded his belief freely to these utterances. From Robert Baxter, who had shared Irving's anticipations, and who himself

[1] From *Histoire d'un Voyage littéraire fait en 1733*, quoted in *Bibliothèque du Magnétisme Animal*, vol. v. (1818) pp. 210–11. See also Bertrand, *op. cit.*

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became eminent amongst the "gifted" persons, we have a very detailed and instructive account of the matter. Baxter had not been present at the earlier manifestations, but had heard of them, and was almost persuaded. In December he came to London, and both heard in others and experienced in himself the working of the new power. To his brother he writes, on December 29th, 1831, as follows:—

"When I was in London I attended at one of the meetings, at which a Mr. T. and a Miss C. spoke; the first in a tongue, the other in prophesying. The prophesying was upon the near coming of our Lord, and rebuking those who did not faithfully declare it; it was delivered in a tone and energy which carried conviction to my soul, that it was the presence, in power, of the Holy Ghost. As the prophesying proceeded, in rebuking the unfaithfulness of those who did not declare the near coming of the Lord, I found laid open the very misgivings of conscience with which I have for the last six months been exercised. . . . In fact, the secrets of my heart, which I had told to none, were laid open; and I felt myself openly rebuked; the effect upon me was that tears ran down my cheeks; and my anguish of soul increasing, I was obliged to hide my face and as far as I could suppress my groanings. This, however, lasted only a few minutes, when the power of the Spirit was so great upon me, that I was obliged to call out, as in agony, for pardon and forgiveness, and for strength to bear a faithful testimony. In these cryings I was, however, at the time conscious of a power of utterance carrying me beyond the natural expression of my feelings. . . . I was conscious of a strained utterance, not my own; and of a power and pressure of the Spirit, quite unutterable in a natural way. After this I was silent, but, with composure of mind, my whole body was convulsively agitated; and for the space of more than ten minutes I was, as it were, paralysed under a shaking of my limbs, my knees rapping one against the other, and no expression except a sort of convulsive sigh. During this period I had no other consciousness than this bodily emotion, and an inexpressible constraint upon my mind, which although it left me composed and sensible of all I was doing, yet prevented my utterance and gave no distinct impression, beyond a desire to pray for the knowledge of the Lord's Will. This increased so much that I was led to fall on my knees and cry in a loud voice, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth': and this I repeated many times, until the same power of the Spirit which I had before felt, came upon me, and I was made to cry out with great vehemence, both of tone and action, that the coming of the Lord should be declared, and the messengers of the Lord should bear it forth upon the mountains and upon the hills, and tell it to the winds, that all the earth should hear it and tremble before the Lord."[1]

[1] *Narrative of Facts characterising the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation*, by Robert Baxter. London, 1833, pp. 147–8.

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Baxter for the next few months spoke much "in the power." These discourses, delivered in most impressive language, conveyed rebuke, warning, exhortation, or encouragement to his hearers; sometimes he would speak "with tongues"; on one occasion he tells us that when sitting at home "a mighty power came upon" him, and he uttered sentences in French, Latin, and in many languages unknown to him; his wife, who was present, identified some of the words as Italian or Spanish. Often the power would direct his doings; he would be called on abruptly to leave a meeting, or cease from some particular course of action. Once he was made, in the power, to declare that he was to go into the Chancellor's Court and there testify, and that for the testimony he would be cast into prison. Not without misgivings he went to the Court and there stood for three or four hours; but no utterance was given to him, and he came away much disheartened.

A singular circumstance noted by Baxter is that when speaking under the influence he could often meet the unspoken thoughts of his hearers. That the "tongues" should solve the religious difficulties of others, as they had already, as we have seen, solved his own, is not perhaps a matter that calls for any supernormal explanation. But he mentions cases in which, meeting with strangers who came to him for counsel, he gave them such information about their private circumstances as convinced them of his supernatural powers.[1]

At a later stage there came through Baxter's lips "an appalling utterance" that the Lord had set him apart for the spiritual ministry; that he was to separate from his wife and family; and that at the end of forty days he would receive a full outpouring of spiritual gifts. The failure of these and other prophecies; the evasive replies of the "Tongues" when asked to account for the non-fulfilment; the appearance of unclean spirits in the congregation; the fact that one or two members had already confessed that they were deluded by false spirits; and finally, the discordant nature of the doctrines preached through the tongues, some of which, delivered in Irving's Church and confirming Irving's special view of the nature of Christ's fleshly Body, appeared to Baxter "fearfully erroneous"—all these considerations, backed by the influence of his wife, who had from the first given a less complete adhesion to the new faith and was naturally unwilling to accept the authority of some of the later utter-

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 14, 18, 70, 72, 135, etc. In none of these cases is the evidence sufficiently detailed to enable us to endorse Baxter's opinion.

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ances, finally convinced Baxter that he had been deceived. But even then it never occurred to him to doubt the supernatural inspiration of the utterances; he inferred that the source was demoniac, not, as he had at first supposed, divine.

It is impossible after reading Baxter's narrative to doubt his honesty in the matter. The impulse did, manifestly, come to him without conscious volition on his part, and the words without premeditation—they were "given to him." This, by the testimony both of Irving and Baxter, was the general characteristic of the utterances. One Miss H., indeed, was pronounced a false prophetess, and admitted the justice of her sentence, mainly because on two or three occasions she had meditated utterances beforehand.[1]

Often the utterances began in "an unknown tongue" and then passed into English, the English being by some regarded as merely a peroration, by others as an interpretation of all that had preceded. One witness gives the following description:—"The *tongue* invariably preceded (the English speaking), which at first I did not comprehend, because it burst forth with an astonishing and terrible crash, so suddenly and in such short sentences that I seldom recovered the shock before the English commenced."[2]

Another characteristic of the speaking was that the phrases used seem almost always to have been taken from the Scriptures, as we have seen was the case with the prophets of the Cevennes; and the same phrase was frequently repeated over and over again, as in the following utterance, preserved by the *Record:* "He shall reveal it! He shall reveal it! Yea, heed it! Yea, heed it! Ye are yet in the wilderness. Despise not His Word! Despise not His Word! Not one jot or tittle shall pass away."[3] But there are few authentic records of the actual words spoken, possibly because the "Spirit" on more than one occasion forbade the writing down of utterances.[4]

As regards the content of the utterances, Baxter notes, among other characteristics of the "power," its secrecy and unwillingness to be examined; its evasiveness when called upon to explain contradictions and failures; its general debasement of the understanding and exaltation of blind faith in authority; finally, the bitterness of spirit shown, and the extraordinary exclusiveness—the whole world outside the one little congregation was denounced and condemned

[1] Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
[2] Quoted by W. Wilks, in his *Life of Irving*, p. 205.
[3] Quoted in Mrs. Oliphant's *Life of Irving*, p. 331.
[4] Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

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to perdition, under the names of Babylon and the Abomination of Desolation.

But enough has been said for our present purpose. There is no need at the present time to defend the spontaneous nature of the utterances, nor the good faith of those who spoke in the power. But no one, apparently, professes to have recognised with certainty the unknown utterances; and Baxter is of opinion that they represented no language whatever, but only a "jargon of sounds."[1]

One other aspect of this singular outbreak should perhaps be noted. There were several cases in which persons were professedly possessed with evil spirits, and were rebuked by the bystanders, and the evil spirits bidden to come forth. In one such case, recorded by Baxter on the authority of Irving and another eye-witness, the "possessed" man, when released by the "tongue," fell upon the ground crying for mercy, and later lay there "foaming and struggling like a bound demoniac."[2]

All these cases, it will be seen, present the same general features. We find a highly contagious epidemic, manifesting itself in convulsions and ecstasy, and variously interpreted by the subject and the onlookers, according to their prepossessions, as demoniac or divine possession. The more marvellous features—the speaking in foreign languages unknown to the speaker, the speaking with unknown tongues, the reading of thoughts—rest upon evidence which must be adjudged quite insufficient. On the other hand, it appears to be fully established that the "possessed" persons were able to speak with extraordinary fluency, and sometimes in a language with which they were at best very imperfectly acquainted.

For the rest, apart from its fluency, the most notable characteristics of the utterance when intelligible appear to have been its grandiose character, both in manner and diction, and its tendency to make use of a limited number of sonorous phrases, drawn generally from biblical sources. In its more elementary forms it seems to have degenerated, as in one of the instances quoted above, into mere emphatic repetition of one or two sentences.

In the history of Modern Spiritualism we shall come across many cases of similar possession, less violent and prolonged, indeed, but apparently equally spontaneous.[3]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 134. [2] Page 26; see also p. 74.

[3] See especially Book II. chap. iv. and Book IV. chap. vi., the case of Mr. Le Baron. The ecstasies of the early Quakers—"witchcraft fits," as their enemy Muggleton called them—were no doubt of this kind.

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In the cases just described the supposed intercourse with the spiritual world came, unless perhaps we make an exception in the case of the Irvingites, unbidden. But there were some who by means of magical incantations, or by visions in the crystal, sought such intercourse for themselves.

One of the best-known examples of this supposed communing with spirits is afforded by the diary of Dr. Dee.[1] Dr. Dee was a scholar and learned mathematician in the sixteenth century, some of whose writings on Euclid, the reform of the calendar, and other matters are still extant. The revelations which he records were obtained through visions in the crystal by one Edward Kelly, Dr. Dee acting the part of scribe and director of the séances. The typical crystal seer was, of course, a young boy without sin. How far Dee's scryer was from fulfilling that ideal may be gathered from the fact that by common report he had, before meeting Dr. Dee, committed forgery and desecrated graves, and had for one or both these offences lost his ears in the pillory; that later Dr. Dee saved him from being dragged away to meet a charge of coining; that the diary itself records his drunkenness on one occasion, and on another the casting out of him of no fewer than fifteen devils. Crystal vision is not, of course, necessarily associated with moral excellence; but it is clearly impossible, with such a *dossier*, to have much confidence in Kelly's good faith. But after all the interest of the revelations does not depend upon the seer's veracity. It is enough for our present purpose that they apparently reflect with fair accuracy the ideas of the time. They form, indeed, a valuable link in the historical series, for while generally they appear, as Kelly himself on one occasion points out, to be founded on earlier mystical writings, they in many respects foreshadow with singular fidelity the utterances of later clairvoyants.

The method of divination was as follows: The sittings commonly began with prayer; thereafter Kelly would see in the crystal the figure of a spiritual being, who would speak to him, or show him words or visions in the crystal, which he would duly report to Dr. Dee. None of these spiritual beings—Madini, Gabriel, Uriel, Nalvage, Il, Morvorgran, Jubanladace, and the rest—appear to have been identified as human spirits, though some of them are spoken of as angels, and all are understood to be of good character. Neither

[1] *A true and faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr. John Dee . . . and some Spirits . . . out of the original copy written with Dr. Dee's own hand . . .* edited by Meric Casaubon, D.D. London, 1659.

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Dr. Dee himself nor the Polish Count Albert Lasky were privileged to see anything in the crystal, and Dee's son, Arthur, who tried to act for a few days during Kelly's recalcitrancy, saw no visions that were worth recording.

The spirits revealed to Kelly many strange things that were to have taken place in the world; a glorious future was prophesied for their patron the Polish Count, who was ultimately to become King of Poland. Again, the destruction of the kingdoms of this world and the restoration of Jerusalem were foretold, all which things were to take place in the days of the Emperor Rudolph, for whom a grand career was to be opened if he would hearken unto the words of the Lord's prophet, Dr. Dee. This latter vision, fortunately enough, came whilst Dee and Kelly were staying at Prague, immediately after the former had been honoured by a private audience with the Emperor.

A great part of the crystal revelations consists of tables ruled in small squares which are filled with letters, numerals, and mystical symbols, understood to be the alphabet of the primitive language. Moreover, much of the book is taken up with the dictation of various invocations or "calls" to spirits. These invocations are given in the primitive language, accompanied by its translation, word by word. There follows also a detailed account of the constitution of the spiritual hierarchy, of their subjects and principalities, and of the lordship exercised over the kingdoms of the earth. The details of this description, as Kelly took occasion to point out, agree with that given by Cornelius Agrippa, who had himself borrowed it from Ptolemy.[1]

Of the primitive tongue itself we are given many specimens; it is read backward, like Hebrew, which indeed (and not Gaelic, as some in these later times do vainly pretend) represents the corrupted form of that primæval tongue which prevailed after the Fall. The primæval speech, employed by the angels, and by Adam in his state of innocency, has very singular properties:—

"Every letter signifieth the member of the substance whereof it speaketh: Every word signifieth the quiddity of the substance . . . signifying substantially the thing that is spoken of in the center of his Creator, whereby even as the minde of man moveth at an ordered speech, and is easily perswaded in things that are true, so are the creatures of God stirred up in themselves, when they hear the words wherewithal they were nursed and brought forth . . . the creatures of God understand you not, you are not of their

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

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Cities; you are become enemies, because you are separated from Him that governeth the City, by ignorance. . . . Man in his Creation, being made an Innocent, was also authorised and made partaker of the Power and Spirit of God, whereby he did know all things under his Creation, and spoke of them properly, naming them as they were."[1]

This doctrine, that the original speech of man, and that of angels now, bore an organic relation to the outer world, so that each name expressed in itself the properties of the thing spoken of, and that the utterance of the name had a compelling power over the creature, was, without doubt, borrowed by Kelly from an earlier philosophy. We shall meet with similar ideas again amongst the German clairvoyants of the first half of the nineteenth century.[2]

There are many references in the early part of the diary to a book, in the primæval language, which Dr. Dee was to write under spirit influence. Apparently the task was not congenial, or the learned doctor was not so good a medium as some of the American automatic writers whose productions we shall consider later,[3] for, on his professing one day that he was "wonderfully oppressed with the Work prescribed" for him to perform, the mother of Madini undertook to carry out the task instead.[4] The rest of the revelations are concerned mostly with allegorical visions, prophecies that failed, and dreary pages of what Casaubon calls "Sermon-like Stuff"—matters which are common to all later clairvoyants.

Finally we have a record of an abortive physical phenomenon. Kelly confesses that he had tried consulting the spirits on his own account, and had left written questions in the window; and "Nalvage" tells him, through the crystal, that the devil had taken those questions away. "Kelly went down to see if it were true, and he found it true."[5] But Dee does not appear to have been as much impressed as he should have been.

The spiritual beings, it will be seen, which by the popular belief of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries intervened in mortal affairs, were not human spirits. The nuns of Loudun were possessed by demons; the Tremblers of the Cevennes were inspired by a divine afflatus. The spiritual entities of the Rosicrucians and of Paracelsus were creatures of the elements—sylphs, gnomes, undines, salamanders—or

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 92.
[2] See below, Book I. chap. vii.
[3] See below, Book II. chap. v.
[4] Pages 26, 27.
[5] Page 80.

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beings still more remote from humanity. The spirits who presented themselves to Kelly in the crystal appear never to have been identified with human prototypes. The idea of intercourse with distinctively human spirits, if not actually introduced by Swedenborg, at least established itself first in the popular consciousness through his teaching. Emanuel Swedenborg is therefore deservedly ranked as the first Spiritualist in the restricted sense in which the term is here used. Of his philosophy, from which the main conceptions which underlie the Spiritualist creed are no doubt derived, it is not necessary to speak in detail; and the less because in its general outlines it is not peculiar to himself, but forms a part of the great mystical tradition. His special contribution to the Spiritualist belief consists in his conception of a future life. Well versed himself in the science of the day—he held from the King the post of Assessor of Mines, and his published works include treatises on metallurgy, human anatomy, and various mathematical and philosophical subjects—he carried the methods and results of physical science into the region of the Unseen. For him there was no gulf fixed between this earthly life and that which he believed to lie beyond death. The great principle of continuity is preserved; Nature makes no leap, even over the grave, and heaven and hell are seen in his prosaic pages to be much like Stockholm or London. In short, he believed in intercourse with the spirits of those who had once lived as men and women, and in the future life as a state admitting of much the same variety of character and circumstance as life on earth—the two chief articles of the Spiritualist creed. It is true that Swedenborg held them with a difference. Himself the son of a bishop, he is still sufficiently under the influence of theological tradition to conceive of the future state as divided into heavens and hells and peopled by angels and devils, though his descriptions of them by no means accord with orthodox conceptions. Again, the intercourse with spirits in which he believed was not a gift common to any or all of mankind, but a special privilege conferred by the Lord on him, alone of all the sons of men. And the spirits with whom he talked were of such quality as accorded with this high embassy; saints and philosophers, kings and popes, Calvin, Luther, Moses, Paul, and John.

Thus the small and singularly exclusive sect which soon grew up and called itself after his name refused to recognise any supplement to the revelations of their master, and taught—an uncharitable view for which they found ample

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warrant in the seer's own writings—that all later pretenders were deceived by lying spirits. But outside this narrow circle Swedenborg's example counted for more than his direct teaching.

The mystical beliefs hitherto touched on were either based on isolated manifestations, and confined to small groups of believers; or, as with the alchemists, formed part of a traditional philosophy to which only the learned had access. The only earlier movement which at all compares with Modern Spiritualism in the extent to which it affected popular belief is no doubt the witchcraft epidemic. Apart, however, from its wide diffusion, and from the demonstration which it affords of the willingness, even of the educated classes, to believe on wholly insufficient grounds in supernatural interference, it is not clear that the bulk of the witchcraft manifestations had much bearing upon the *evidential* aspects of Spiritualism. For most of the evidence upon which the belief in witchcraft depended, when not merely traditional, consisted, as a brief analysis will show, partly of the preposterous exaggeration of trivial coincidences, but chiefly of statements made by ignorant peasants, which can most readily be ascribed to mental delusion, especially to that form which consists in mistaking past dreams and imaginations for actual occurrences.[1]

The evidence for witchcraft falls under four main heads: (*a*) the confessions of witches themselves; (*b*) the corroborative evidence of lycanthropy, apparitions, etc.; (*c*) the witch-marks; (*d*) the evidence of the evil effects produced on the supposed victims.

(*a*) The confessions, as is notorious, were for the most part extracted by torture or the fear of torture, or by lying promises of release. In England, where torture was not countenanced by the law, the ingenuity of Matthew Hopkins and other professional witch-finders could generally devise some equally efficient substitute, such as gradual starvation,

[1] See Mr. Gurney's remarks in *Phantasms of the Living*, vol. i. p. 118: "There is a characteristic of uneducated minds which is only exceptionally met with in educated adults—the tendency to confuse mental images, pure and simple, with matters of fact. This tendency naturally allies itself with any set of images which is prominent in the belief of the time; and it is certain now and then to give to what are merely vivid ideas the character of *bonâ-fide* memories. The imagination which may be unable to produce, even in feeble-minded persons, the belief that they *see* things which are not there may be quite able to produce the belief that they *have seen* them—which is all, of course, that their testimony implies." See also Mr. Gurney's "Note on Witchcraft," *ibid.*, pp. 172–85, for an exhaustive analysis of the evidence for the alleged marvels.

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enforced sleeplessness, or the maintenance for hours of a constrained and painful posture. But apart from these extorted confessions, there is evidence that in some cases the accused persons were actually driven by the accumulation of testimony against them, by the pressure of public opinion, and the singular circumstances in which they were placed, to believe and confess that they were witches indeed. Some of the women in Salem who had pleaded guilty to witchcraft explained afterwards, when the persecution had died down and they were released, that they had been "consternated and affrighted even out of their reason" to confess that of which they were innocent.[1] And there were not a few persons who voluntarily confessed to the practice of witchcraft, nocturnal rides, compacts with the devil, and all the rest of it. The most striking instances of this voluntary confession are afforded by children. At Antoinette Bourignon's Girls' School at Lille, in 1639, the whole thirty-two children ultimately accused themselves of witchcraft, confessed to having intercourse with the devil and to riding through the air nightly to attend his infernal banquets. All but one of the children recanted when examined by the magistrates. The one girl who maintained her guilt to the last was imprisoned; and Mademoiselle Bourignon expressed a pious regret that for the good of her soul she had not been burnt.[2]

The children at Moira, in Sweden, who also (with many of their elders) confessed to infernal compacts and nightly rides to Blockula, where they met the devil, danced, feasted, and engaged in various dull, if unquestionably diabolic, diversions, were not so fortunate. Fifteen of them, if Dr. Horneck's narrative is to be believed, were put to death, and many others were cruelly whipped.[3]

[1] "And indeed that Confession that it is said we made, was no other than what was suggested to us by some Gentlemen, they telling us we were Witches, and they knew, and we knew it, and they knew that we knew it, which made us think that it was so," etc., etc. (*An Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*, by Francis Hutchinson, D.D., etc. London, 1718, p. 85). Another instance of an extorted confession is given by Sinclair (*Satan's Invisible World Discovered*), who tells us that the facts are attested by "an eye and ear-witness—a faithful Minister of the Gospel." The woman in this case, immediately before her execution, attested that her confession was a false one, made through sheer weariness of life, after the persecutions which she had undergone.

[2] *Complete works of Antoinette Bourignon* (Amsterdam, 1686), vol. ii. p. 200. There are three separate accounts of this case of witchcraft: two by Bourignon herself, *La Parole de Dieu* and *La Vie Extérieure*; one, *La Vie Continuée*, written some years later by a friend. It is a valuable lesson in evidence to compare this last version with the first-hand accounts.

[3] See Dr. Horneck's *Account of what happened in the Kingdom of Sweden in 1669, 1670 and upwards*, quoted by Glanvil, in *Sadducismus Triumphatus*.

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In both these cases, it should be noted, the confessions, though *voluntary*, were by no means spontaneous. They were, in fact, suggested; in the first case by Antoinette Bourignon, who from the very first seems to have been troubled by the conviction that her little charges were not as pious as they should have been, and ultimately got it into her foolish head that they were in league with the devil, and made no secret of her opinion. The only grounds adduced for this belief, prior to the confession of the children themselves, were that on one occasion she saw little black figures with wings flying around them, and straightway told the children what she had seen; and that, some time later, one of the girls who had been locked up for some trivial misdemeanour managed to escape from her confinement. It is difficult to know how far, in a case of this kind, the "confessions" were intended seriously by the children themselves; but the fact that they were persisted in before the priests who were called in to investigate the matter certainly tends to prove that they were not merely jest. Probably the children themselves could not have given a very clear account of the matter. In the Moira case the whole population seems to have been the victims of an epidemic delusion, to which children would naturally fall easy victims; and the force of the suggestion was no doubt aided by leading questions from the Commission appointed by the King to examine into the matter.

But it is hardly necessary to labour the point. For even among the earlier writers on witchcraft the opinion was not uncommonly held that the nocturnal rides and banquets with the devil were merely delusions, though the guilt of the witch was not lessened thereby. And in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at least in English-speaking countries, this belief seems to have been held generally alike by believers in witchcraft and their opponents. Thus Gaule, "But the more prodigious or stupendous (of the things narrated by witches in their confessions) are effected meerly by the Devill; the witch all the while either in a Rapt ecstasie, a charmed Sleepe, or a melancholy Dreame; and the Witches imagination, phantasie, common sense, only deluded with what is now done, or pretended."[1] Even Antoinette Bourignon, observing her scholars eat "great

[1] *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1646, p. 109). To the same effect, Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience concerning Evil Spirits*, etc. (London, 1693; London Reprint of 1862, p. 279). Beaumont, *A Treatise of Spirits* (London, 1705, pp. 388, 389). See also Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 76, and the Preface to the anonymous edition of the *True and Exact Relation of the trial of the Chelmsford witches of 1645* (London Reprint of 1837, p. 111).

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pieces of Bread and Butter" at breakfast, pointed out to them that they could not have such good appetites if they had really fed on dainty meats at the devil's Sabbath the night before.

(*b*) But if the witch's own account of her marvellous feats may be explained as, at best, the vague remembrance of a nightmare, it is hardly necessary to go beyond this explanation to account for the prodigies reported by others. In most cases there is no need to suppose even so much foundation for the marvels, since the evidence (*e.g.* for lycanthropy) is purely traditional. And when we get accounts at first hand, they are commonly concerned, not with such matters as levitation, or transformation of hares into old women, but merely with vague shapes seen in the dusk, or the unexplained appearance of a black dog. Even so the evidence comes almost exclusively from ignorant peasants, and is given years after the events. The corroborative evidence on which the Salem witches were put to death consisted largely of statements from various neighbours that six, eight, or fourteen years ago the deponent awoke to find the shape of the accused in his bedroom, which thereupon grievously assaulted him and then disappeared; or that, on dates not stated, he saw a black pig approaching him, or was much beset by the gambolling of phantom puppies which ran between his legs.[1]

Indeed, it is not easy to find any respectable evidence in the annals of witchcraft for any marvel which even seems to call for explanation by sensory hallucination. One of the best-attested cases occurs in the trial of the Chelmsford witches in 1645 before referred to. At that trial Matthew Hopkins, the witch-finder, John Sterne, gentleman, and six others, testified that on the previous night they had sat up in the room where the accused was confined in order to watch for the appearance of her imps; that the accused promised that her imps should appear; and that the witnesses saw them, to the number of five or six, enter the room in the shape of cats, dogs, or other animals.

The evidence of a professional witch-finder, who was well paid for his services, is perhaps not more worthy of credence than that of a professional medium at the present day. But John Sterne seems to have been a credible person, and was so convinced of the truth of what he saw that he afterwards wrote a pamphlet about it; and the interval was so short that it is difficult to suppose a hallucination of memory. It

[1] *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, by Cotton Mather, D.D. (London, 1693; London Reprint of 1862, pp. 130–50).

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is to be noted, moreover, that the witnesses had apparently sat with the supposed witch for some hours, watching for the appearance of her familiars, and that the witch's own promise to them had raised expectation to the highest pitch. The circumstances were therefore undoubtedly favourable for the production of sensory hallucination.

(*c*) The evidence for "witch-marks" does not greatly concern us. The insensible patches on which Matthew Hopkins and other witch-finders relied may well have been genuine in some cases. Such insensible areas are known to occur in hysterical subjects, and the production of insensibility by means of suggestion is a commonplace in modern times. The supposed witches' teats, which the imps sucked, appear to have been found almost exclusively, like the imps themselves, in the English-speaking countries.[1] Any wart, boil, or swelling would probably form a sufficient warrant for the accusation; we read in Cotton Mather of a jury of women finding a preternatural teat upon a witch's body, which could not be discovered when a second search was made three or four hours later;[2] and of a witch's mark upon the finger of a small child, which took the form of "a deep red spot, about the bigness of a Flea-bite."[3] And the witch-mark which brought conviction to the mind of Increase Mather in the case of George Burroughs was his ability to hold a heavy gun at arm's length, and to carry a barrel of cider from the canoe to the shore.[4]

So far, then, we may search the annals of witchcraft in vain for any testimony for material marvels at all comparable to the evidence adduced in recent years for the physical manifestations of Spiritualism. Let us now turn to the last head of evidence.

(*d*) Of most of the evidence based upon the injuries suffered by the witches' supposed victims, it is difficult to speak seriously. If a man's cow ran dry, if his horse stumbled, his cart stuck in a gate, his pigs or fowls sickened, if his child had a fit, his wife or himself an unaccustomed pain, it was evidence acceptable in a court of law against

[1] See Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 57. "I meet with little mention of Imps in any country but ours, where the Law makes the feeding, suckling, or rewarding of them to be Felony." [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

[3] Increase Mather, *op. cit.*, p. 210. See Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, pp. 140, 173, 180; and Gaule, *Select Cases*, p. 6.

[4] Pages 125, 126, 286. "Had I (Increase Mather *loquitur*) been one of his judges, I could not have acquitted him; for several persons did upon oath testify that they saw him do such things as no man that has not a Devil to his Familiar could perform."

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any old woman who might be supposed within the last twelve months—or twelve years—to have conceived some cause of offence against him and his. Follies of this kind are too well known to need repetition.

But there is another feature of witchcraft, at any rate of the cases occurring in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and America, which is not so well recognised, and which has a more direct bearing upon our present inquiry —the predominant part played in the initial stages of witch persecution by malevolent or merely hysterical children and young women.

In Glanvil's collection of cases in *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, the first eight narratives deal with witchcraft of the ordinary type. In the first three of these the protagonists are young children; in two others a servant girl plays the principal part. One of these five cases—the Drummer of Tedworth—will be discussed in the next chapter. Again, in the *Collection of Modern Relations*[1] we find a case of a woman who was tried for a witch apparently upon the sole evidence of a Poor Woman's Boy who was struck dumb by coming upon her suddenly crouching behind a bush; and in another case in the same collection the afflicted person and chief witness was Mistress Faith Corbet, aged ten or eleven, who fell into convulsions because poor old Alice Huson had carried off her gloves. In a sixteenth-century case at Chelmsford one of the chief witnesses was Agnes Brown, a child of twelve, who testified to seeing a big black dog with a pair of horns on his head, and a face like an ape. This fearsome being entered the dairy where she was churning butter, and conversed with her.[2] The outbreak at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, was started by Abigail Williams, aged twelve, and her little friend, Elizabeth Parris. It was a boy of eleven who started the persecution of the Lancashire witches (1634); it was some silly children, the eldest only sixteen, who were the first and chief witnesses against the Samuel family, known as the Witches of Warbois (1593). Rose Cullender and Annie Duny, known as the Suffolk witches, who were tried before Sir Matthew Hale in 1665, were condemned on the testimony of young children, who fell into fits and vomited nails and crooked pins. It would be easy to lengthen the list; but, in effect, it is enough to point out that these cases of child evidence constitute the type to which most of the

[1] London, 1693.

[2] *The examination and confession of certain Witches . . . in 1556.* London, 1864; reprinted from a pamphlet in the Library of Lambeth Palace.

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cases of spontaneous[1] origin at this time will be found to conform.

The symptoms of the alleged bewitchment were, in all these cases, monotonously alike. The victims would fall into fits or convulsions, of a kind which the physicians called in were unable either to diagnose or to cure. In these fits the children would commonly call out on the old woman who was the imaginary cause of their ailment; would profess, at times, to see her shape present in the room, and would even stab at it with knife or other weapon. (In the most conclusive cases the record continues that the old woman, being straightway sought for, would be found attempting to conceal a corresponding wound on her person.) These fits, which sometimes lasted, with slight intermission, for weeks together, would be increased in violence by the approach of the supposed witch; or, as Hutchinson notes,[2] by the presence of sympathetic spectators. The fits, as was also commonly noted by contemporary chroniclers, would diminish or altogether cease when the witch was imprisoned or condemned: on the other hand, if the supposed witch were released the victim would continue to suffer horrible tortures, insomuch that, at the Salem trials, one old woman who had been acquitted by the jury was, because of the hideous outcry from the afflicted persons in court, straightway re-tried and condemned.[3] The witch's touch would always provoke severe attacks; indeed, contact with the witch, or the establishment of rapport between her and her victim by means of some garment worn by the latter, as in Mistress Faith Corbet's case, was generally regarded as an essential prerequisite of the enchantment. Once this rapport established, the mere look of the witch, or the direction of her evil will, would suffice. The afflicted in Salem were, as the Mathers testify, much tortured in court by the malevolent glances of the poor wretches on trial; and two "visionary" girls added greatly to the weight of the evidence by foretelling, with singular accuracy, when such or such of the afflicted persons then present would feel the baleful influence, and howl for anguish.[4] It should be added—though the evidence, as we now understand the word, for the fact alleged is of course practically negligible—that it was commonly reported that the witch's

[1] From this generalisation are excluded, of course, all such cases of witch persecution as were initiated from the outside, by the direct interference of royal, priestly, or professional witch-finders.

[2] *Historical Essay*, p. 106. [3] Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[4] *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, pp. 139, 215, etc.

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victim could, although blindfolded, distinguish her tormentor by the touch alone from all other persons, and could even foresee her approach and discern her actions at a considerable distance.[1]

The effect of the convulsions and cataleptic attacks, which modern science would unhesitatingly dismiss as being simply the result of hysteria, was heightened in many cases by manifestations of a more material kind. It was a common feature for the victim to vomit pins, needles, wool, stubble, and other substances; or for thorns or needles to be found embedded in her flesh. In a case recorded by Glanvil an hysterical servant girl, Mary Longdon, in addition to the usual fits, vomiting of pins, etc., was tormented by stones being continually flung at her, which stones when they fell on the ground straightway vanished. Her master bore witness in court to the falling of the stones and their miraculous disappearance. Moreover, the same Mary Longdon would frequently be transported by an invisible power to the top of the house, and there "laid on a board betwixt two Sollar beams," or would be put into a chest, or half suffocated between two feather-beds.[2]

Gross as these frauds appear to us, it is singular that for the most part they remained undetected, and even, it would seem, unsuspected, not merely by the ignorant peasants, for whose benefit the play was acted in the first instance, but in the larger theatre of a court of law. But there are some notorious instances of confession or detection. Edmund Robinson, the boy on whose accusation the Lancashire witches were tried, subsequently confessed to imposture. Other youths were detected with blacklead in their mouths when foaming in sham epileptic fits, colouring their urine with ink, concealing crooked pins about their persons in order to vomit them later, scratching the bedposts with their toes, and surreptitiously eating to repletion during a pretended fast.[3] But commonly the spectators were so convinced beforehand of the genuineness of such portents that they held it superfluous to examine the claims of any particular performance of this kind on their credence.

It is difficult to know in such cases where self-deception ends and where malevolent trickery begins. Nor would the examination of these bygone outbreaks of hysteria—trivial in themselves as terrible in their consequences—be of interest

[1] *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 286–8, etc.
[2] *Ibid.*, edition of 1726, pp. 313–26.
[3] Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, pp. 185–224.

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in the present connection, except for the fact that we find here the primitive form of those Poltergeist manifestations which gave the popular impetus in 1848 to the belief in Modern Spiritualism, and which are still appealed to by those who maintain the genuineness of the physical manifestations of the séance room as instances of similar phenomena occurring spontaneously. The type remains the same, though its modes of expression have slightly changed. The neurotic children who, two or three centuries ago, attracted to themselves the interest of their little world by posing as martyrs to supernatural malevolence, now minister to their diseased egotism by professing to be the agents of spiritual beings or the unconscious vehicles of occult forces. Pseudo-epileptic fits and vomiting of pins are out of date; but throwing of stones and mysterious transportations of the human subject, as in Mary Longdon's case, occur in many modern Poltergeists, notably in the historical instance of the Phelps children at Stratford (Connecticut) in 1850.[1]

Since, then, this survival from the witchcraft beliefs of the Middle Ages, in itself insignificant, has assumed adventitious importance, both from the part which it has demonstrably played in recent history and from the weight still attached to the subject by some competent persons, it has seemed worth while to examine in detail, in the next chapter, some typical instances of the modern Poltergeist manifestations.

[1] Described at length in Book II. chap. i. below.

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CHAPTER II

ON POLTERGEISTS

MYSTERIOUS knocks and rappings, accompanied by throwing of stones, ringing of bells, breaking of crockery, and other more violent disturbances, have been commonly reported in all civilised countries for the past two or three centuries, to go back no further. It is here proposed, rather for the reasons indicated in the last chapter than from any exaggerated appreciation of their intrinsic merits as evidence, to analyse some of the best-known and most frequently quoted cases of the kind occurring before 1848 for which we have testimony at first hand.[1]

The case to be first quoted goes far to justify the statement made in the last chapter that the so-called Poltergeist performances in modern times are a direct legacy from the witchcraft of the Middle Ages. For whilst we have in this case the same general type of disturbances which characterise the nineteenth-century cases, there is a seventeenth-century reference to the malicious action of a supposed wizard, and the cessation and later renewal of the manifestations are reported to have shown that singular correspondence with the condemnation and subsequent escape of the suspected agent, which forms so marked a feature in the sufferings of the witch's alleged victims. The evidence offered for the disturbances, it will be seen, is about on a level with that for the witchcraft phenomena in general.

[1] That the reader may have some assurance that the cases analysed in this chapter have not been chosen as unduly favourable to the rationalist interpretation, I think it well to state that my selection is based on a letter from the distinguished naturalist, Dr. A. R. Wallace, which appeared in the *Journal* of the S.P.R. for February, 1899. Dr. Wallace, in advocating the supernormal character of the Poltergeist manifestations, quotes nine cases as affording good evidence; three of these cases, however, present no first-hand evidence, and one occurred after 1848—the limit assigned in the text. The five remaining cases, viz. the Drummer of Tedworth, the Castle of Slawensik, Bealings Bells, Mary Jobson, and the Wesley Case, are dealt with below.

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THE DRUMMER OF TEDWORTH

In March, 1661, John Mompesson, of Tedworth, in the county of Wilts, caused a certain vagrant drummer to be arrested and taken before a Justice of the Peace. The drum was confiscated, and in the middle of April, during Mr. Mompesson's temporary absence, was taken to his house. On his return, Mompesson learnt that great noises had been heard in the house; the noises thereafter came night after night, in the shape of thumping and drumming. An invisible drum was constantly heard to beat Roundheads, Cuckolds and Tat-too, and would also knock at request a given number. Sometimes the manifestations were accompanied by "a bloomy noisome smell," as of sulphur; also chairs, boots, a board, and other objects were seen to move across the room of their own accord; a bed staff hit the minister on the leg, but without hurting him; "the old Gentlewoman's" clothes were flung about the room, and her Bible hid in the ashes; mysterious lights were seen; the man-servant was terrified by the vision of "a Great Body with two red and glaring Eyes"; a gentleman found all his money turned black in his pockets; and Mompesson's horse was found one morning with a hind leg fixed so firmly in its mouth that it was difficult for several men to get it out with a lever. But the disturbances were especially frequent and violent in the neighbourhood of the younger children. The bedsteads would be beaten and shaken as they lay in them, and a sound of scratching, as with iron talons, would be heard. Moreover, "it would lift the Children up in their Beds, follow them from one Room to another, and for a while haunted none particularly but them." The disturbances ceased when the drummer was sentenced to transportation, and recommenced when "I know not how ('tis said by raising Storms and affrighting the Seamen) he made shift to come back again."

The whole of the account is given in Glanvil's own words, but it is founded, as he tells us, partly on the oral relation of Mr. Mompesson and the other witnesses to him, partly on Mompesson's letters. There are also extant two letters of Mompesson's, dated respectively 1672 and 1674. But he gives in these no detailed confirmation of Glanvil's account; indeed, when the second letter was written he expressly says that he had lent Glanvil's book "for the use of Lord Hollis" the previous year, and did not know what the account contained. Glanvil first published his narrative, as we learn

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from the Preface to the third edition of *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, in 1668. It had been in part written some years previously, but not apparently from full notes, for only two precise dates are given in the whole narrative. But even if we assume that Glanvil had accurately put down, possibly some years later, all that he had heard from Mompesson and others, it does not amount to much; for it does not appear that Mompesson himself witnessed any of the more marvellous incidents—the drops of blood, the chairs moving by themselves, "the Great Body with two red and glaring Eyes," and all the rest of it. These things were witnessed by neighbours, by men-servants, by a "Roomfull of People," or by an undistributed "they." So that Glanvil's account of them may be third hand or tenth hand. The only first-hand account which we have is Glanvil's own. Glanvil paid one visit to the house "about this time"—the last date given on the previous page being January 10th, 1662. Glanvil's account of all he saw and heard is, in brief, as follows: On hearing from a maid-servant that "it was come," he, with Mr. Mompesson and another, went up to a bedroom; "there were two little modest Girls in the Bed, between seven and eleven Years old, as I guest." Glanvil heard a scratching in the bed "as loud as one with long Nails could make upon a Bolster." This lasted for half an hour and more, and Glanvil could not discover the cause; it was succeeded by a panting, like a dog, accompanied by movements in the bedding; also the windows shook; also Glanvil saw a movement in a "Linnen Bag" that hung against another bed, but was not apparently sufficiently sure of the accuracy of his observation to mention this incident in the first (1668) edition. Further, Glanvil was aroused by an untimely knocking next morning; and his horse fell ill on the way home, and died two or three days later.[1]

I pass over the Cock Lane ghost (1762), because though we may admit with Mr. Lang[2] that the so-called "exposure" was inconclusive—no exposure in matters of this kind ever is conclusive—not even Mr. Lang can persuade us that, apart from the pleasing literary aroma that pervades it, the case presented for us in contemporary newspaper gossip is worthy our serious consideration. Nor need we linger over the Stockwell case (1772). It is true that the evidence here is first hand; but for practical purposes it is of little value.

[1] *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, by Joseph Glanvil, F.R.S.; third edition, 1689. Also Preface to second part, containing two letters from Mompesson.

[2] *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, pp. 161–70. London, 1894.

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Six persons signed a general statement of the disturbances, setting forth that various articles of furniture, crockery, pickle jars, and so on were thrown about and broken, without any apparent cause for the movements. The narrative does not explicitly state that any of the six persons saw any particular thing done, and collective testimony in such matters is as vain a thing as collective responsibility in another sphere. But we may no doubt accept the statement that five pails were filled with the fragments of the broken china, and that the servant girl, Ann Robinson, a young woman of twenty, betrayed a surprising restlessness, being always present on the scene of action and walking backwards and forwards the whole time.[1]

THE CASTLE OF SLAWENSIK

Councillor Hahn and a friend, a young officer named Charles Kern, spent some months in the winter of 1806–7 in the lonely Castle of Slawensik, in Silesia. Shortly after their arrival—apparently in December, 1806—various disturbances broke out: bits of lime fell or were thrown about the room; then strange noises were heard; knives, spoons, snuffers, and all manner of small objects were flung about; occasionally objects were seen to rise from the table and fall on to the ground. The disturbances lasted for about two months, and the nuisance finally became so great that the young men had to move to other apartments.

The disturbances are said to have been witnessed by two other officers and various other reputable persons whose names are given, but we have only one account, written by Councillor Hahn on November 19th, 1808, and by him given to Kerner in 1828. From the fact that no dates are given it may be inferred that Hahn did not keep notes—at any rate, not accurate notes. There is no apparent reason for doubting Hahn's honesty, but his studies of Kant and Fichte are no guarantee of his competence as a witness. In any case, his unsupported testimony, given eighteen months or more after the events, is not good evidence, even for things which he saw, or believed himself to see, with his own eyes. But many of the marvels are only given at second hand. It was the dauntless Kern who saw in the glass the white figure of a woman looking at him; Hahn stood before the glass for a

[1] The authority for the Stockwell ghost is a contemporary pamphlet entitled *An Authentic, Candid, and Circumstantial Narrative of the Astonishing Transactions at Stockwell*, etc. London, 1772. The account is quoted by Mrs. Crowe, *Nightside of Nature*, third edition, pp. 412, etc.

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quarter of an hour and saw only his own reflection. It was Kern, again, who saw the white dog; Hahn only heard the dog's footsteps. Again, it was Kern and Hahn's servant, during Hahn's absence at Breslau, who saw a jug of beer rise from the table, as if lifted by an invisible hand, and pour out a glass half full, and the glass then raise itself in the air and tilt its contents (which disappeared without leaving a trace) down an invisible throat. In default of corroborative evidence of any kind from the other witnesses, it seems not improbable that the whole affair was an elaborate practical joke at Hahn's expense.[1]

BEALINGS BELLS

On the 2nd of February, 1834, the housebells at Bealings, near Woodbridge, in Suffolk, the residence of Major Moor, F.R.S., began to ring violently—sometimes singly, sometimes three or more together—without any apparent cause. They continued so to ring at intervals until the 27th March, when the disturbances finally ceased. The cause was never discovered.

The evidence for this singular outbreak is at first hand; it is practically contemporaneous, being based on notes made at the time and written out in full at intervals within a few days of the occurrences; the witness is a Fellow of the Royal Society, who devoted, on his own showing, much time and ingenuity to the search for a cause for the manifestations, and who recorded with scrupulous care the atmospheric conditions and the readings of barometer and thermometer during their progress.

If the evidence then fails to impress us as it undoubtedly impressed Major Moor, it is because Major Moor himself gives us good cause for distrusting his competence as a witness. He is practically the sole witness, and from the outset he had made up his mind, not only that the phenomena could not be explained, as he justly points out, by "the known laws of the electric theory" or the expansion of metals by rise of temperature, but that they were inexplicable by any cause known to science; for on February 5th, 1834—that is, three days after the bell-ringing began—he writes: "I am thoroughly convinced that the ringing is by no human agency" (p. 5), and later (p. 22) he repeats his conviction that the bells "were not rung by any mortal hand."

[1] *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, edition of 1832, vol. ii. pp. 236–52. A translation of Hahn's account is given by Mrs. Crowe (*The Seeress of Prevorst*).

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That this conviction rested on grounds wholly insufficient, and that Major Moor was the kind of man who could make a strong-sounding statement of this kind without fully realising its meaning, is shown by the fact that in the interval (p. 9) he had admitted the possibility of the bell-ringing being due to trickery. But he gives us other and stronger grounds for discounting his testimony. Though he devoted many pages to describing the courses and the attachments of the wires, the state of the atmosphere, and so on, Major Moor never tells us of whom his household consisted, and never describes a single occasion on which, when they were all gathered together in his presence, the bell-ringing occurred. He boasts, indeed, that he took no such precautions against trickery. A writer in the *Ipswich Journal* had made the sensible suggestion that Major Moor should begin his investigations by gathering all his household into one room and posting trustworthy friends round about the house. Major Moor, in quoting the letter, adds, "I did not in any way follow the advice therein offered."

Major Moor's testimony is freely quoted by Spiritualists and other advocates of the Poltergeist theory; but in fact the book might plausibly be interpreted as a gentle satire on those who are ready, on such evidence as that here offered, to believe in supernormal or even unfamiliar agencies.[1]

MARY JOBSON

Mary Jobson was a child of twelve or thirteen, who at the latter end of 1839 was smitten with a mysterious malady, the most prominent symptoms of which were bloodshot eyes, constipation, swelling of the abdomen, occasional convulsions, and the occurrence of insensitive areas on the body. The phenomena occurring in her presence consisted chiefly of raps and knocks, the opening and shutting of doors, and beautiful music; occasionally water was mysteriously thrown on the floor, and astronomical designs on one occasion made their appearance on the ceiling of the bed-chamber. The case is recorded by Dr. Reid Clanny, F.R.S.

Dr. Clanny himself, indeed, neither saw nor heard anything of the alleged phenomena. Of the five medical men, besides Dr. Clanny, mentioned by name as having visited the girl during her illness, two only, Mr. R. B. Embleton and Mr. Drury, both young men, have given an account of what

[1] *Bealings Bells: an Account of the Mysterious Ringing of Bells*, etc., etc., by Major E. Moor, F.R.S. Woodbridge, 1841.

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they witnessed. Neither saw anything out of the way; but both heard knocks and loud scratchings—apparently on the foot of the wooden bedstead in which the child lay. Dr. Drury on one occasion, calling on the child after her recovery, heard at her suggestion "most exquisite" music. His account of the manifestation is as follows: (I experienced) "much difficulty in drawing her into conversation, but at last she suddenly exclaimed, 'Oh, what music!' and on listening I distinctly heard most exquisite music, which continued during the time I might count a hundred." Dr. Drury does not give the date of this incident, and the letter from which the above extract is taken is dated simply "Sunday morning, 2 a.m." It was certainly written some time after the occurrence.[1]

On another occasion Mr. Embleton was specially invited to hear "the voice." This voice, which Mr. Embleton describes as realising his ideas of angelic sweetness, dictated as follows: "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, etc. . . . I am the physician of the soul. . . . This is a miracle wrought on earth. . . . Mark, I am thy God sounding out of the heavens," etc. The knocks, the throwing about of water, and so on, which are described by the other eleven witnesses, all of whom were apparently superstitious villagers, so illiterate in some cases as to be unable to write, appear to have been simply the puerile trickeries of a mischievous girl.

A remarkable feature in the case is the occurrence of visions, like some of those attested in witchcraft trials, which are best to be explained as hallucinations either of sense or memory. Thus one witness testifies to having seen the figure of a lamb passing, unseen by all others, through the house; and three witnesses, two of them a husband and wife, quite illiterate, recount that at the child's bidding they looked up at the ceiling of her room and saw there a beautiful representation of the sun, moon, and stars "in a variety of pleasing and brilliant colours."[2] From another witness we learn that the colours were green, yellow, and orange. As no reference is made to this vision by any member of the family who were said to have been present, and as no trace of it apparently remained on the ceiling, it is difficult to suppose that it had any objective foundation.

The ailment, which baffled all the physicians (or rather the three physicians who have written about the case), was

[1] It appears only in the second edition of Dr. Clanny's pamphlet.

[2] The wording is apparently that of Dr. Clanny, who wrote down the account, as the actual witnesses were unable to do so.

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as obviously hysterical as "the voices" were blasphemous; the cure was as mysterious as the disease. After eight months of dropsy and convulsions (Dr. Embleton), brain disease (Dr. Clanny), intolerable torture (all the witnesses), she suddenly turned her sympathising relatives out of the room, dressed herself in a quarter of an hour, and was completely restored to health. Dr. Clanny's enthusiastic belief in the genuineness of the case may perhaps have been due to the fact that the girl (amongst whose affable spirits were the Virgin Mary and a large circle of apostles and martyrs) told him that his name had been favourably mentioned to her at different times by Jesus Christ, St. Paul, and St. Peter. Dr. Clanny quotes this amazing statement in all seriousness.[1]

THE EPWORTH CASE

I have reserved until the last what is at once the most fully authenticated case in the literature of the subject and the most instructive for those who read with understanding—the disturbances in the Parsonage at Epworth, the birthplace of John Wesley. The main disturbances lasted with intervals for two months, December and January, 1716–17, with occasional outbreaks after that date. The record consists (1) of letters written to Samuel Wesley (John's elder brother) by his mother and his two sisters, Susannah and Emilia. These letters are dated January, February, and March, 1717, that is, within a few weeks of the disturbances. (2) A copy of an account written by Samuel Wesley (John's father). The copy was made by Samuel Wesley, the son, in 1730, from a copy made by John Wesley in 1726. (3) Letters written by Mrs. Wesley and four of her daughters to John Wesley in the summer and autumn of 1726, more than nine years after the occurrences. The evidence comprised under (1), (2), and (3) was first published in 1791 by Priestley. A copy of the letters and diary in the handwriting of Samuel Wesley (John's brother) had been given to Priestley, as he explains, by the Rev. S. Badcock, who had himself received the MSS. from a granddaughter of Samuel Wesley.[2] (4) An account compiled in 1726 by John Wesley from the letters and from conversation with some of the other spectators, and published in the *Arminian Magazine.*

[1] *A Faithful Record of the Miraculous Case of Mary Jobson*, by Dr. W. Reid Clanny, F.R.S. Monkwearmouth, 1841.

[2] *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley and his Friends*, by Joseph Priestley, LL.D., F.R.S., 1791.

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A. *First-hand Contemporary Accounts.*

We will take first the contemporary letters and diary, and in the first instance we will consider only the statements made by the actual eye- or rather ear-witnesses of the things described. Mrs. Wesley writes on January 12th, 1717, that, beginning from an early date in December, she heard unaccountable knockings, mostly in the garret or the nursery:—

"One night it made such a noise in the room over our heads as if several people were walking; then run up and down stairs, and was so outrageous, that we thought the children would be frightened, so your father and I rose and went down in the dark to light a candle. Just as we came to the bottom of the broad stairs, having hold of each other, on my side there seemed as if somebody had emptied a bag of money at my feet, and on his as if all the bottles under the stairs (which were many) had been dashed in a thousand pieces. We passed through the hall into the kitchen, and got a candle and went to see the children. The next night your father would get Mr. Hoole to lie at our house, and we all sat together till one or two o'clock in the morning, and heard the knocking as usual. Sometimes it would make a noise like the winding up of a jack; at other times, as that night Mr. Hoole was with us, like a carpenter plaining deals; but most commonly it knocked thrice and stopped, and then thrice again, and so many hours together."

That is practically all that Mrs. Wesley relates of her own personal experience.

There are two letters from Miss Susannah Wesley, dated January 24th and March 27th. In the first she records her own experience as follows:—

"The first night I ever heard it, my sister Nancy and I were set in the dining-room. We heard something rustle on the outside of the doors that opened into the garden, then three loud knocks, immediately after other three, and in half a minute the same number over our heads. We enquired whether anybody had been in the garden, or in the room above us, but there was nobody. Soon after my sister Molly and I were up after all the family were abed, except my sister Nancy, about some business. We heard three bouncing thumps under our feet, which soon made us throw away our work and tumble into bed. Afterwards the tingling of the latch and warming-pan, and so it took its leave that night.

"Soon after the above-mentioned we heard a noise as if a great piece of sounding metal was thrown down on the outside of our chamber. We, lying in the quietest part of the house, heard less than the rest for a pretty while, but the latter end of the night that

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Mr. Hoole sat up on, I lay in the nursery, where it was very violent. I then heard frequent knocks over and under the room where I lay, and at the children's bed head, which was made of boards. It seemed to rap against it very hard and loud, so that the bed shook under them. I heard something walk by my bedside, like a man in a long nightgown. The knocks were so loud that Mr. Hoole came out of their chamber to us. It still continued. My father spoke, but nothing answered. It ended that night with my father's particular knock, very fierce. It is now pretty quiet, only at our repeating the prayers for the King and prince, when it usually begins, especially when my father says: 'Our most gracious Sovereign Lord,' etc. This my father is angry at, and designs to say *three* instead of *two* for the royal family. We all heard the same noise, and at the same time, and as coming from the same place."

There is one letter from Miss Emily, undated, but obviously written at about this time. She describes various noises, more particularly groans, the sound as of "a vast coal" being thrown down in the kitchen; the sound as of a stone being thrown in among the bottles under the "best" stairs; "something like a quick winding up of a jack at the corner of the room by my bed's head"; knocks on the floor and elsewhere, mostly three times running.

The account by old Mr. Wesley was apparently in great part written very shortly after the disturbances. It is not, however, dated; and it is clearly not a day by day record, as in a diary, for he is occasionally uncertain of the exact dates, and the account is mostly written as a continuous narrative. Mr. Wesley was the last to hear the noises, though he had been told what other members of the family had heard. On December 21st he was awakened by nine loud knocks, apparently in the room next to his bedroom. Two or three nights later Mr. and Mrs. Wesley were both aroused by the loud and continuous noises, and searched the house, with the result already described in her narrative.

Thereafter he frequently heard the knocks; they answered him when he rapped with his stick knock for knock; they came on the children's bedstead, in his own study, and in almost every room in the house; they would make a great noise at family prayers at the names of King George and the Prince. He often spoke, but never received any articulate answer, "only once or twice two or three very feeble squeaks, a little louder than the chirping of a bird, but not like the noise of rats, which I have often heard." Often the latch of his bedroom would be lifted when he was in bed. Finally, he records: "I have been thrice pushed by an invisible

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power, once against the corner of my desk in the study, a second time against the door of the matted chamber, a third time against the right side of the frame of my study door as I was going in."

B. *Second-hand Contemporary Accounts.*

These are all the experiences which are given in the earlier accounts at first hand. We will now turn to the contemporary second-hand evidence. Emily Wesley tells us that her sister Hetty heard coming down the stairs behind her "something like a man, in a loose nightgown trailing after him"; that the knocks would answer Mrs. Wesley if she stamped on the floor and bid them do likewise; that Mrs. Wesley had seen something under a bed "like a badger, only without any head that was discernible"; and that Robin Brown, the man-servant, had seen the same creature twice, the last time in the appearance of a white rabbit.

Miss Susannah adds, under date March 27th, 1717:—

"Last Sunday, to my father's no small amazement, his trencher danced upon the table a pretty while without anybody's stirring the table."

Mr. Wesley has also much to say of the experiences of others: that Mrs. Wesley had seen a thing "most like a badger"; that "one night when the noise was great in the kitchen, and on a deal partition, and the door in the yard, the latch whereof was often lift up, my daughter Emilia went and held it fast on the inside, but it was lifted up, and the door pushed violently against her, though nothing was to be seen on the outside"; and that Robin Brown saw "something come out of the copper-hole like a rabbit, but less."

C. *Later First-hand Accounts.*

To turn now to the letters written in 1726. Mrs. Wesley adds to the account which she had given nine years before, that on one occasion the sounds answered her when she knocked; that at another time, "Upon my looking under the bed, something ran out pretty much like a badger"; and gives the following variant of the noises heard on the nocturnal journey round the house, undertaken by herself and Mr. Wesley:—

"Near the foot (of the stairs) a large pot of money seemed to be poured out at my waist, and to run jingling down my nightgown to

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my feet. Presently after we heard the noise as of a vast stone thrown among several dozen of bottles which lay under the stairs, but upon our looking no hurt was done. In the hall the mastiff met us, crying and striving to get between us."

Thus, in the later version the one sound, diversely interpreted, has become two successive sounds, and various decorative details—the jingling down the nightgown, the search among the bottles, the fright of the mastiff—have been added.

So sister Emily, in the later account, adopts and enlarges upon the description already given in her father's account (but wanting in her own earlier letter) of seeing the latch of the kitchen door move, and finding the door itself resist her efforts to shut it. So in sister Susannah's later account, what had been described in her earlier letter as "the tingling of the latch and warming-pan," is now amplified into "the latch of the door then jarred, and seemed to be swiftly moved to and fro."

Sister Molly and sister Nancy (who were not represented in the earlier correspondence) also gave accounts of their experiences to their brother Jack in 1726. From the latter's account, which is written in the third person, apparently as representing John Wesley's notes of a conversation with her, the following extract may be quoted:—

"One night she (Nancy) was sitting on the press bed, playing at cards with four of my sisters, when my sisters Molly, Etty (Hetty?), Patty, and Kezzy were in the room, and Robert Brown. The bed on which my sister Nancy sat was lifted up with her on it. She leaped down and said, 'Surely old Jeffery would not run away with her.' However, they persuaded her to sit down again, which she had scarce done when it was again lifted up several times successively, a considerable height."

This incident is not mentioned by Molly, or indeed by any of the others.

Lastly, we have an account given by Robin Brown, the servant, in 1726, to John Wesley, confirming the story of the white rabbit, already quoted, and adding this new incident:—

"Soon after, being grinding corn in the garrets, and happening to stop a little, the handle of the mill was turned round with great swiftness. He said nothing vexed him but that the mill was empty. If corn had been in it, old Jeffery might have ground his heart out for him."

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John Wesley's own account, based apparently exclusively—since he was not himself a witness of any of the phenomena—on the correspondence and on conversations with his family and others in 1726, it is not necessary to consider at length. It introduces, however, one or two sensational details, such as his father's threatening the unseen author of the disturbances with a pistol, which find no place in the earlier narratives.

Now a record of this kind suggests two questions: First, What precisely are the things to be explained? Second, What may the explanation be? Most of the writers who, from the days of Glanvil, have formed from a mass of similar narratives collections of supernatural seemings, have, as already shown, passed at once to the second question, and have found the search for a solution so fascinating that they have never returned to look for an answer to that indispensable preliminary inquiry. Let us in this instance reverse the customary procedure, and ask first, What are the things to be explained in the Wesley case? To begin with, we are not called upon to explain what it was that made the handle of the mill turn round, to the amazement and chagrin of Robin Brown. The real problem is a simpler, if also a less alluring one—to find out, to wit, what made Robin Brown believe, nine years after, that he had seen the handle of the mill move. Again, we have got to ask, *not* what was the badger-like form which Mrs. Wesley saw, but how it came about that Mrs. Wesley's husband and daughter, in 1717, and Mrs. Wesley herself, in 1726, testified that she had seen such a form. Nor need the vagaries of Mr. Wesley's trencher, nor Robin Brown's spectre somewhat like a white rabbit, nor the door which resisted the stoutest efforts of Emilia, perplex us. The problem, in fact, as now simplified is to search for a rational explanation of various noises, suggesting, indeed, an intelligent, but not obviously a supernormal origin, which disturbed the Wesley household for a couple of months in 1716–17.

Old Samuel Wesley had at the time seven daughters living, of whom two, Patty and Keziah, were children, and five were, apparently, sufficiently grown up to write letters. Of these five, two are represented in the earlier correspondence, four in the later. One only, Hetty (Mehetabel), has contributed no account at all. There is no obvious reason for this silence, for Hetty, as we learn from John Wesley's account, was nineteen at the time. She had apparently undertaken to write, but failed to carry out her promise;[1] and,

[1] See Miss Susannah's letter of March 27th, 1717.

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by the testimony of all those concerned, she seems to have enjoyed more of Jeffery's attention than any other member of the household. Consider, for instance, these extracts from the correspondence:—

Mrs. Wesley writes, January 25th and 27th, 1717: "All the family, as well as Robin, were asleep when your father and I went downstairs (on the nocturnal exploration already described), nor did they wake in the nursery when we held the candle close by them, only we observed that Hetty trembled exceedingly in her sleep, as she always did before the noise awaked her. It commonly was nearer her than the rest." Or again, this extract from Miss Emily's letter (1717): "No sooner was I got upstairs, and undressing for bed, but I heard a noise among many bottles that stand under the best stairs, just like the throwing of a great stone among them, which had broken them all to pieces. This made me hasten to bed; but my sister Hetty, who sits always to wait on my father going to bed, was still sitting on the lowest step of the garret stairs."

And again: "It never followed me as it did my sister Hetty. I have been with her when it has knocked under her, and when she has removed has followed, and still kept just under her feet."

Again, in Mrs. Wesley's later account, after describing loud noises which they heard in their bedroom, she writes: "Mr. Wesley leapt up, called Hetty, who alone was up, and searched every room in the house."

In sister Susannah's later account: "Presently began knocking about a yard within the room on the floor. It then came gradually to sister Hetty's bed, who trembled strongly in her sleep. It beat very loud, three strokes at a time, on the bed's head."

And, once more, in John Wesley's version of Mr. Hoole's experience: "When we" (*i.e.* Mr. Wesley and Mr. Hoole) "came into the nursery it was knocking in the next room; when we were there it was knocking in the nursery, and there it continued to knock, though we came in, particularly at the head of the bed (which was of wood), in which Miss Hetty and two of her younger sisters lay."

After the perusal of these extracts, Miss Hetty's inexplicable reticence seems more than ever to be deplored. Perhaps the conjunction of this reticence with Miss Hetty's singular habit of trembling in a sound sleep when loud noises were going on all round her, and with the notable predilection shown by the Poltergeists for her person, is not in itself

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sufficient, in the absence of fuller details, to justify the charge of trickery against her; but it hardly seems worth while to inquire whether the noises which perplexed the Wesley family did indeed proceed from a supernormal source.[1]

Those who are familiar with the history of geology will remember that it has frequently happened that naturalists have been puzzled by some stray bone, tooth, or other fragment which seemed for a time not to belong to any known organic type, and to foreshadow an impossible, or at least a paradoxical monster; until later research, by bringing to light a complete skeleton, resolved the difficulties and showed that the anomalous fragment fitted into the general scheme. Now the Wesley narrative is like the complete skeleton of the pterodactyl or the dinosaur. Nearly all other Poltergeist narratives are mere organic fragments. For the most part the evidence is so imperfect that we infer a monstrosity; it is only when, as here, we find the case complete, that our monstrosity proves to be a harmless but instructive Saurian.

But to drop the metaphor, the Wesley case indicates pretty clearly that the main reason for the apparently inexplicable element in these narratives is the defect of the evidence. When we have only second-hand accounts, or accounts written down months or years after the events, as in Glanvil's and Hahn's narratives, or accounts from uneducated or irresponsible persons, as in Mary Jobson's case, we find an abundance of marvellous incidents; when, as here, we have almost contemporary accounts at first hand from sober-minded witnesses, the element of the marvellous is reduced to a minimum. But the peculiarly instructive feature of the Wesley case is that we can see how the witnesses, whilst in the earlier letters they narrate of their own personal experience only comparatively tame and uninteresting episodes, allow their imaginations to embellish the ex-

[1] The Spiritualist writers contend that the Wesley Poltergeist continued to manifest for more than a generation later. The inference is founded on a single passage in a single letter of Emily Wesley's, dated February 16th, 1750, given in Adam Clarke's *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (London, 1823, p. 195). The passage runs as follows: "Another thing is that wonderful thing called by us Jeffery. You won't laugh at me for being superstitious if I tell you how certainly that something calls on me against any extraordinary new affliction; but so little is known of the invisible world, that I at least am not able to judge whether it be a friendly or an evil spirit."

It will be seen that the writer does not even mention in what form the spirit "called"; and it seems probable that the warnings referred to may have been purely subjective. At any rate, no reason is given for assimilating them to the earlier disturbances.

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periences of other members of the household; and that these same embellishments, *nine years later*, are incorporated in the first-hand accounts as genuine items of personal experience.

I have elsewhere dealt with the results of the investigation by the Society for Psychical Research of some recent British Poltergeist cases.[1]

The conclusions drawn from those investigations may be briefly summarised as follows:—

1. We have positive evidence, by confession or detection, or both, that in some cases tricky little girls or boys have thrown about the crockery and upset the kitchen furniture with their own hands, whilst the onlookers have accepted the portent as a manifestation of supernormal powers.

2. We have, speaking broadly, *no good evidence* for anything having been done which could not have been done by a girl or boy of slightly more than the average cunning and naughtiness.

3. In the few cases where the records are sufficiently full to admit of such a comparison being made, it is found that when second-hand accounts and first-hand accounts of the same incidents are compared, or when accounts written down long afterwards are compared with accounts written down at the time, or accounts given by an excitable and ignorant witness with those of an educated and competent observer, the more marvellous features which appear in the one set of reports are almost or altogether wanting in the other.

4. The author or centre of the disturbances is nearly always a child, generally a young girl; and the outbreak is very often associated with some abnormality or disease on her part. In no case that I have yet seen recorded has any adequate or intelligible motive beyond that of mere childish vanity and love of excitement been assigned for the performance.

The peculiar difficulty of investigating the ordinary Poltergeist is that the phenomena cannot as a rule be produced to order; and that any insistence on conditions or even betrayal of suspicion is liable to stop them altogether. The Poltergeist is a delicate organism, which flourishes only in a favourable environment. Actual exposure of the fraud practised becomes therefore extremely difficult; and as a matter of fact, in many of the recorded instances, as with Major Moor in the Bealings Bells case, those who attest the

[1] *Proceedings S. P. R.*, vol. xii. pp. 45–115. *Studies in Psychical Research*, chap. v.

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phenomena seem to have made up their minds from the outset that they were privileged to witness, if not something supernatural, at least something which the known laws of physics would not explain. There are, however, a few recorded cases of "electric" girls, which form a partial exception to this rule, inasmuch as the manifestations recurred in their presence with tolerable regularity, and investigation was therefore within certain limits practicable. Cases of this kind possess a special interest for us, since they furnish an illustration of the development of the Poltergeist performance into the phenomena of the séance-room. The best-known instance is Angelique Cottin, who practised in Paris at the beginning of 1846.

Angelique was a peasant girl of fourteen living in a small village near Mortagne, in Normandy.[1] On the evening of January 15th, 1846, when she was engaged with three other girls in weaving gloves, the frame at which they were working began to jump about. The movement was soon seen to be connected with Angelique, though apparently there was no conscious agency on her part, nor any visible connection between her and the object moved. The mere touch of her garments, or even the approach of her hand, seemed to be sufficient to move heavy pieces of furniture, or to throw scissors or light articles across the room. The matter was investigated by the curé, to whom the girl was taken in the first instance under suspicion of witchcraft, and by various local celebrities. Finally, her parents, willing to profit by the curiosity excited by these mysterious movements, brought the child to Paris. There Dr. Tanchou, happening in to his bookseller's one morning, heard of the prodigy, and straightway investigated. His observations are summarised as follows: Chairs and sofas held down by one or more men, exerting all their strength, were violently forced away when Angelique sat down on them; a heavy table was moved from its place by the mere contact of her petticoats; a small piece of paper would at her approach be blown away or made to rotate upon a pin thrust through it; balls of pith or of feathers hung upon a silken thread would be alternately attracted or repelled by the force emanating from her body; she could distinguish by the touch between the poles of a magnet, the north pole giving her a shock, whilst the south pole exercised no effect. It was reported further that a

[1] The account which follows of Angelique Cottin is taken from a contemporary pamphlet, *Enquête sur l'authenticité des phénomènes électriques d'Angelique Cottin*, par le Dr. Tanchou. Paris, 1846.

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magnetic needle would be violently agitated in her presence. Dr. Tanchou sometimes noticed a cold wind, like a breeze upon his hands, during the progress of the phenomena.

All this Tanchou reported to Arago, who himself took the girl to his observatory, and there witnessed violent movements of a chair held by two of his colleagues. Arago reported to the Academy of Sciences, which straightway nominated a Commission of six, amongst whom were Arago himself, Becquerel, and Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire, to investigate and report further. Three weeks later, at the sitting of the 9th March, 1846, the Commission reported. They found that the magnetic needle experienced no disturbance in the girl's presence, and that the girl herself was not able to distinguish between the north and south poles of the magnet; the only phenomena which the Commission had observed were the sudden and violent movements of a chair on which the girl was sitting. They were not satisfied, however, that these movements were not due to muscular force; but, after they had expressed their doubts on the point, the girl's manager reported that the power had temporarily waned: and no further opportunity had since been offered for investigation. Thus far the Commission.

Tanchou, Hébert de Garnay, and other persons remained convinced that the phenomena testified to the operation of some new force, probably electrical in its nature. But no evidence is offered for this conclusion that will bear examination. And even in the naïvely sympathetic reports from himself and his friends that Tanchou prints there are many observations which are singularly suggestive of fraud. It was constantly observed, for instance, that the contact of the girl's garments, particularly the lower extremity of her petticoats, was necessary to the production of the phenomena;[1] and several observers noticed, in connection with the throwing about of chairs and other objects, that there was a double movement on the part of the girl, a movement first in the direction of the object thrown, and afterwards away from it, the first movement being so rapid that it generally escaped detection.[2]

The contact of the lower edge of the petticoats with the object moved recalls the similar proceeding reported of the Italian medium, Eusapia Paladino;[3] whilst the violent movement of a chair in opposition to the efforts of the men who tried to hold it down is curiously like the feats of skill and

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 14. [2] Pages 3, 21, etc.
[3] See below, Book IV. chap. i.

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strength performed in recent years by a Mrs. Abbott, who styled herself the "Little Georgia Magnet."[1]

We read that a few years earlier, in 1839, two "electric" girls from Smyrna, whose phenomena seem to have closely resembled those of Angelique Cottin, had landed at Marseilles with the intention of giving public performances, but found that the atmosphere of France was too humid to admit of the display of their powers.[2] There are accounts of other "electric" girls in the early literature of American Spiritualism.

[1] See a report on her performances by Professor Oliver Lodge (*Journal S. P. R.*, vol. v. pp. 168, 169). Mrs. Abbott's performances, though Professor Lodge shows that they could all be explained by the deft exercise of the muscles, combined with some knowledge of human nature, seem for a time to have completely baffled the Press and the public.

[2] From the account given in the *Boston Weekly Magazine*, December 28th, 1839, quoted by Rogers, *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents*, p. 100.

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CHAPTER III

THE SYMPATHETIC SYSTEM

THE men who, because of the theory of physical effluence which informed all the speculations of the Animal Magnetisers, rejected the genuine phenomena of the induced trance, were, no doubt, justified in their suspicions of the theory. For, in fact, not only did Mesmer borrow his theories ready-made from earlier mystics, but even the name "magnetic" was in common use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to denote the sympathetic system of medicine which was founded on those mystical doctrines. Paracelsus is commonly reputed to be the founder of this magnetic philosophy. He did, indeed, employ the actual magnet in medicine, recommending its use, inasmuch as it attracted martial humours, in fluxes, inflammatory diseases, hysteria, and epilepsy. But with Paracelsus the "magnet" was commonly spoken of in a metaphorical sense, and with his later disciples its actual use in therapeutics seems to have been almost entirely discontinued. Maxwell, in his treatise *De Medicina Magnetica*, hardly mentions the magnet at all; and Fludd uses it simply as illustrating by its behaviour the interaction of living bodies in the sympathetic system. In brief, the mystics of this period regarded the magnet less as possessing a special virtue in itself than as presenting in miniature a picture of the forces which governed the universe. The action of the magnet at a distance was ascribed to a force or fluid—for its exact nature is usually left undefined—radiating from its substance; and a like force is inferred to radiate from the stars, from the human body, and from all substances in the universe: each body thus reciprocally affecting and being affected by all the rest. Moreover, these rays were not lifeless or fortuitous, but were guided in their incidence and their operations by the indwelling spirit of the body from which they proceeded—a spirit of which the stream of light or other palpable rays formed merely

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the gross vehicle. Thus Fludd writes: "The Etheriall Sperm, or Astralicall influences, are of a far subtiler condition than is the vehicle of visible light. . . . It is not the starry light which penetrateth so deeply, or operateth so universally, but the Eternal Centrall Spirit."[1]

Again, the duality of the forces resident in the magnet was interpreted as typifying the dual or reciprocal action which, manifesting itself as flux and reflux, light and darkness, heat and cold, masculine and feminine, systole and diastole, centrifugal and centripetal force, formed the rhythm of the material universe.

Further, the man himself was understood to be a microcosm, or miniature reflection of the whole complex world; as Fludd puts it, "Man containeth in himself no otherwise his heavens, circles, poles, and stars, than the great world doth."[2] It followed, therefore, that man comprised in his body the virtues of a magnet; nay, that his body, like this planet, was one large magnet, though philosophers differed as to the exact disposition of the corporeal poles. Moreover, any substance, especially any living thing, to which was imparted of the body of the living man, or even any of his waste products, such as sweat and the clippings of the nails or hair, became indued with the like magnetic properties.[3] And from the living tissues of the man, or from such waste products, could be compounded a magnet of wondrous remedial virtue. It is this magnet—the *magnes microsmi*—which Paracelsus and his successors commonly understood by the words "magnet" and "magnetical."

It is, then, on these ideas—the radiation from all things, but especially the stars, magnets, and human bodies, of a force which would act on all things else, and which was in each case directed by the indwelling spirit, together with the conception of a perpetual contest between reciprocal and opposing forces—that the mysticism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mainly depends. Again, upon these ideas, combined with the Paracelsian doctrine of Signatures, and the proposition, itself a corollary from the doctrine of the

[1] *Mosaicall Philosophy* (London, 1659), p. 221. Cf. Maxwell, *De Medicina Magnetica* (Frankfort, 1679), p. 3. "Ab omni corpore radii corporales fluunt, in quibus anima sua praesentia operatur, hisque energiam et potentiam operandi largitur." And again, Aphorism xvii., "Stellae vitalem spiritum corpori disposito ligant per lucem et calorem, eidemque iisdem mediis infundunt." And again, Alkindus, quoted by Fludd, "Mundus elementarius est exemplum Mundi Syderei . . . manifestum est quod omnis res hujus mundi radios faciat suo more ad instar Syderum."

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

[3] Quodlibet corpus, cui mummia viva in alio homine propinatur, illico fit magnes (Paracelsus, quoted by Fludd, *op. cit.*).

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magnes microcosmi, that a dissevered portion of a body retains something of the virtue of the body from which it was taken, and can act magnetically upon it, the theory of sympathetic medicine was based; a theory familiar probably to most readers through the medium of Sir Kenelm Digby and his weapon-salve. The practice of anointing the weapon instead of the wound was in fact a logical deduction from the general theory. As Fludd puts it, if I may venture to paraphrase his statement of the doctrine, it would be useless to attempt to heal the wound so long as a portion of the vital spirits, remaining in disastrous union with the weapon which wrought the mischief, should by its antipathetic influence react upon its fellow-spirits in the body of the patient. But if we act upon that portion of the vital spirits which still adheres to the weapon, which we can most conveniently do by applying an appropriate ointment, then "the Oyntment so animated by those spirits" (*i.e.* the spirits on the weapon) "will become forthwith magneticall, and apply with a magneticall aspect and regard unto those beamy Spirits which stream forth invisibly from the wound," and the patient shall be ensured a speedy recovery.[1]

It was a necessary consequence of this doctrine that the physician might affect his patient, or generally that one man might affect another, if the requisite conditions were fulfilled, "at any reasonable but unlimited and unknown distance."

[1] *Mosaicall Philosophy*, p. 262. The entire passage, since it presents a succinct, if not altogether perspicuous, statement of the theory, seems worth quoting:— "If, after the wound is made, a portion of the wound's externall blood, with his inward spirits, or the internall spirits onely, that have penetrated into the weapon, or any other thing which have searched the depth of the wound, be conveyed from the wound at any reasonable but unlimited and unknown distance, unto an Oyntment, whose property is Balsamick, and agreeing specifically with the nature of the creature so wounded, the Oyntment so animated by those spirits will become forthwith magneticall, and apply with a magneticall aspect and regard unto those beamy Spirits which stream forth invisibly from the wound, being directed thereto by the Spirituall bloody spirits in the weapon or other thing which hath received or included them: and the lively and southern beams, streaming and flowing from the wound, will with the northern attraction of the Oyntment, so magnetically animated, concur and unite themselves with the northern and congealed, or fixt, bloody spirits contained in the oyntment, and stir them to act southernly, that is, from the center to the circumference; so that by this reciprocall action, union or continuity, a lively southern beam will act and revive the chill, fixt or northern beams which do animate the oyntment with a magneticall vertue, and quickened spirits of the oyntment, animated by the spirits of them both, and directed by the spirits which were first transplanted into it, doth impart by the said union or continuity his balsamick and sanative vertue unto the spirits in the wound, being first magnetically attracted, and they afterwards by an unseparable harmony, transfer it back into the wound. And this is the reason of that Sympatheticall or anti-patheticall reference and respect, which is by experience observed to be between the Oyntment and the wound."

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Thus Paracelsus: "By the magic power of the will a person on this side of the ocean may make a person on the other side hear what is said on this side . . . the ethereal body of a man may know what another man thinks at a distance of 100 miles or more."[1] Fludd expresses the same idea more generally: "How, by relation of naturall things unto one another, they do, after a corporall contact or touch is made between them, operate wonderfully, and that by a Magneticall concent and Spirituall continuity . . . by a mutuall operation at an unknown distance."[2] And Maxwell definitely applies the principle to the relation between physician and patient: "Qui spiritum vitalem particularem efficere novit, corpus, cujus spiritus est, curare potest ad quamcunque distantiam, imploratâ spiritus universalis ope."[3]

The reader who will compare these ideas with Mesmer's own statement of his theory[4] will see that the later mystic contributed little of his own to the philosophy which he borrowed. His peculiar service consists in the fact that, whilst exploiting the mystical doctrines for his own private advantage, he hit upon a practical application of them which has already proved of singular interest to psychology and of some value to therapeutics, and whose ultimate developments we are yet unable to foresee.

The writers whose views we have briefly considered, widely though their methods and results differ superficially from those of modern science, were still animated by something of the scientific spirit. They essayed to relate phenomena to one another by comparison, observation, and analysis, and to subsume them under universal laws. The main difference would seem to be that the mystics, with an impatience, and even contempt, for the mere brute fact, which was part of the disastrous inheritance from earlier centuries, built up their magnificent generalisations on the basis of a few bare hints from the external world. They lacked both the inclination and the means to wait for the slowly maturing results of experimental investigation. They did, indeed, it may be said, interrogate Nature after their own fashion; like jesting Pilate, they asked, "What is truth?" and, anticipating the slow accents of the reluctant Sphinx, took the echo of their

[1] *Philosoph., Sag.* i. cap. 60, quoted by Hartmann, *Life of Theophrastus Bombastes*, p. 296. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 252. [3] *Op. cit.*, aphorism 69.

[4] Quoted below, at the beginning of chapter iv. A detailed comparison of Mesmer's ideas with those of earlier mystics, including, besides those mentioned in the text, Van Helmont, Kircher, Borel, and others, is given in Thouret's *Recherches et doutes sur le Magnétisme Animal*, Paris, 1784. See also Bertrand, *Du Magnétisme Animal en France* (Paris, 1826), pp. 13–18.

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own voices for the answer. The mystical philosophy, in fact, was an attempt at a short cut to knowledge, a premature synthesis of the universe. But it was, nevertheless, a synthesis on rationalist lines. The factors in the explanation offered were not spiritual beings acting by arbitrary will, but effluences radiating under ascertainable laws. It was this rationalist view, which culminated in the eighteenth century, and, naturally enough, in France, which Mesmer and his immediate followers adopted; and even at the present day Paris, faithful to her old tradition, remains the headquarters of the rationalist school of Mysticism. Baraduc, de Rochas, Luys, Gibier, and others stand as the supporters of fluids as against spirits.[1]

The rivalry between the two schools of interpretation, it need hardly be said, dates from a very early period in the history of Mysticism. At the very time when Fludd and Maxwell were expounding the magnetical system of medicine, marvellous cures were being effected throughout the country by methods which curiously foreshadowed those employed in our own times by the hypnotic treatment. But the seventeenth-century healer ascribed his success to a divine gift, just as some of Mesmer's contemporaries saw in the "magnetic" crisis signs of spiritual intervention.

Valentine Greatrakes, the son of an Irish Protestant gentleman of Affane, co. Waterford, was born in 1628. He served for some six years as a lieutenant in the army in Ireland. On his retirement in 1656 he lived on his own estate, was made a Justice of the Peace, and acted for some time as Registrar of Transplantation. In 1662 he had "an Impulse or strong Persuasion" in his own mind that on him was bestowed the gift of curing the King's Evil. Straightway many came to him from the country round, and were cured by the laying on of his hands. Three years later there came a similar Impulse, foreshadowing the gift of curing the ague, a suggestion which the next day was successfully put to the proof. "Within some small time after this," he continues, "God was pleased by the same or the like Impulse to discover unto me, That he had given me the gift of healing." Thereafter Greatrakes laid his hands on all that sought his aid. He was so besieged by sufferers that he had to set aside three days a week whereon, from six in the morning to six in the evening, he received all who came to him. The matter came to the ears of the Bishop of the Diocese, who forbad

[1] Since this sentence was written two of those named, Luys and Gibier, have passed away.

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Greatrakes to exercise his powers. Greatrakes answered that he could not obey a command to cease from works of charity, and so continued.

In January, 1666, at the request of Lord Orrery, he came to England, and though he failed entirely to cure the Countess Conway, on whose behalf he had been summoned, he continued to exercise his gift with surprising, though not uniform, success, first in the provinces, and later in London. He was successful in curing or sensibly alleviating such diverse maladies as the King's Evil, palsy, dropsy, epilepsy, ulcers, the stone, wounds and bruises, lameness, deafness, partial blindness, "Pthysick," besides innumerable cases of vaguely described pains and weakness. His cures are attested by a considerable number of grateful patients and other credible witnesses, doctors, divines, and persons of quality, including Robert Boyle, Sir William Smith, Dean (afterwards Bishop) Rust, Richard Cudworth, and Andrew Marvell.

His method of operating was to stroke with his hand the part affected, by which means the pain was gradually dislodged from the diseased part, and ultimately driven to the extremities—fingers, toes, or even nose or tongue—and so out of the body. Sometimes the pain divided. On one occasion part thereof fell into the great toe of the patient's left foot, and the other part into the little toe of the right foot, and so left the patient. It was noted that the fingers or toes during the process were commonly rendered insensible to pain inflicted from the outside, as by pinching or pricking.

A contemporary medical witness gives the following explanation of this method of expelling disease:—

"These considerations made me think that God had been pleased to bestow upon Mr. Greatarick such a Complexion and Temperament, that his Touch or Stroking should instantly maturate Diseases, or render them Turgent; whereupon the part touched being strengthened, and the blood and spirits Invigorated, a Heterogeneous Ferment or paine (which if not occasioned by some evident and externall cause, is caused by a Heterogeneous Ferment) is expelled from the corroborated place to some other more Weake; that being corroborated, it is driven upon another, and so on, till it be quite ejected."[1]

Greatrakes himself, whose entire honesty in the matter can hardly be doubted—he practised without fee or reward of any

[1] *The Miraculous Conformist*, p. 17.

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kind, and at enormous expenditure of time and energy—was clearly of opinion that his power of healing was not a natural endowment, but "an extraordinary gift of God." He even records an experiment made on one occasion which went to show that the power did not consist in any physical effluence from himself. And many of the diseases which he cured he conceived to be caused by the possession of devils, who were driven out under his hands.[1]

[1] *A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine Greatraks, and divers of the Strange Cures by him lately Performed; written by himself in a Letter addressed to the Honourable Robert Boyle, Esq.*, etc., etc. (London, 1666.) See also *The Miraculous Conformist; or an account of Severall Marvailous Cures performed by Mr. Valentine Greatarick*, by Henry Stubbe, Physician at Stratford upon Avon (Oxford, 1666), p. 34. "Mr. Greatarick would often affirm that, in his opinion, it was some Evill Spirit gotten into the Body of the Child."

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CHAPTER IV

MESMER AND HIS DISCIPLES

MESMERISM, like chemistry, is a French science. For even though the birthplace of Mesmer himself—which, indeed, as in the case of greater men, is to some extent uncertain—was not in France, yet France was the country of his adoption; it was by Frenchmen that his doctrines were first welcomed, and it is on French soil, under the various names of Animal Magnetism, Mesmerism, Hypnotism, Hysteria, or Suggestion, from the days of Bergasse and Puységur to those of Charcot and Bernheim, that they have borne most abundant fruit.

Franz Antoine Mesmer was born in or about 1734. He studied for the medical profession, and took his doctor's degree at Vienna in 1766, choosing as the subject of his inaugural thesis *De planetarum influxu*, or, as he himself translated it later, "De l'influence des Planettes sur le corps humain." It is from the publication of this essay that Mesmer himself dates the discovery of Animal Magnetism.[1] But his ideas on the nature and extent of this influence, as already said, seem to have contained little that was original, being founded on the writings of various older mystics.[2] The best exposition of his views is contained in his own statement drawn up some years later in a series of propositions, of which a few may be here quoted:—[3]

1. Il existe une influence mutuelle entre les corps célestes, la terre et les corps animés.

2. Un fluide universellement répandu et continué de manière à ne souffrir aucun vuide, dont la subtileté ne permet aucune comparaison, et qui, de sa nature, est susceptible de recevoir, propager

[1] *Précis historique de faits relatifs du Magnétisme Animal*, p. 1. Paris, 1781.
[2] See preceding chapter.
[3] In 1779; *Mémoire sur la découverte du Magnétisme*, p. 83.

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et communiquer toutes les impressions du mouvement, est le moyen de cette influence.

3. Cette action réciproque est soumise à des loix méchaniques, inconnues jusqu'a présent.

4. Il résulte de cette action, des effets alternatifs qui peuvent être considérés comme un flux et reflux.

6. C'est par cette opération (la plus universelle de celles que la nature nous offre) que les relations d'activité s'exercent entre les corps célestes, la terre et ses parties constitutives.

9. Il se manifeste particulièrement dans le corps humain, des propriétés analogues à celles de l'aimant; on y distingue des pôles également divers et opposés qui peuvent être communiqués, changés, détruits et renforcés; le phénomène même de l'inclinaison y est observé.

10. La propriété du corps animal qui rend susceptible de l'influence des corps célestes et de l'action réciproque de ceux qui l'environnent, manifestée par son analogie avec l'aimant, m'a déterminé à la nommer *Magnétisme Animal.*

14. Son action a lieu à une distance éloignée, sans le secours d'aucun corps intermédiaire.

15. Elle est augmentée et réfléchie par les glaces comme la lumière.

16. Elle est communiquée, propagée, et augmentée par le son.

He professes to have spent many years in testing and verifying his ideas by experiment and observation on all kinds of diseases; but it is not until 1773 that he actually gives details of any cures effected by the applications of his methods. The first patient was a young woman afflicted with periodical attacks, which, from the description given, seem to have been of an epileptic nature. He applied magnets to the limbs of the sufferer, and a rapid cure was effected. Publicity was given to this case by the Jesuit, Hell, who had, it appears, furnished the magnetic plates used by Mesmer, and who claimed that the cure was due to the application of principles discovered by him. There ensued a bitter controversy between the two men. The next few years seem to have been spent by Mesmer in vindicating his own prior claim to the discovery, in the practice of the therapeutic virtues of Animal Magnetism, and in knocking at the doors of the various learned societies of Europe. No door was opened to him; and finding little honour and less profit in his own country, he came in 1778 to Paris, and there took up his abode. From the learned societies of Paris he met with as little recognition as from those of Vienna, Berlin, and London. One of his first converts, however, was M. D'Eslon, medical adviser to the Count d'Artois. In

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September, 1780, D'Eslon summoned a general meeting of the Faculty of Medicine to lay before it a statement of Mesmer's doctrines. He began by reciting the propositions from which extracts are given above, and then made on Mesmer's behalf a formal proposal that the Faculty should investigate the subject by choosing twenty-four patients, of whom twelve should be treated by Animal Magnetism, and the remainder by the orthodox methods, and should then compare the results.[1] The reply of the Faculty was to reject the proposal and to warn D'Eslon that his name would be struck off the rolls at the end of the year if he had not in the interval formally recanted his heretical beliefs.

But if Mesmer found little favour with the wise and prudent, he met with a reception more cordial and much more profitable from the general public. So much attention did his cures—or the rumour of them—excite, especially, as it would seem, in the fashionable world, that in March, 1781, the Minister de Maurepas was commissioned by the King to offer him a pension of 20,000 livres, and a further sum of 10,000 livres annually to provide a suitable house, on condition that he would establish a school and communicate the secret of his treatment. Mesmer rejected the terms, ostensibly because he held it beneath his own dignity and the dignity of the great truth which he proclaimed to be a party to such a bargain. But it is not difficult to infer that if the terms, sufficiently liberal as they seem to us, had been commensurate with his appetite, he would have been willing to take the cash and let the credit go. For, two years later, in 1783, a subscription was set on foot to which each would-be pupil contributed 100 louis (2,400 livres), and a sum of no less than 340,000 livres (nearly £14,000) was handed over to Mesmer. In return he gave a course of lectures on his system. Before admission to these lectures he had required each pupil to sign an undertaking that he would not practise on his own account, nor impart the secret to others without Mesmer's permission. As the price of this permission he subsequently proposed that they should establish centres of magnetic treatment in every town of importance in France, and should hand over to him half of all the fees that they received. His pupils, many of them men of position, who had no desire to practise for money, formed themselves into a *Société de l'Harmonie*, and vindicated their claim to the title by repudiating, after an unseemly squabble, their part of the contract.

[1] *Précis historique*, etc., p. 113.

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In the following year the Government took a further step and charged two learned bodies, the *Faculté de Médecine* and the *Société royale de Médecine*, with the task of examining into Animal Magnetism. The Commissioners chosen from the Faculté asked the King to add to their number some members of the Academy of Sciences, and five delegates from that body, including Benjamin Franklin, Bailly, and Lavoisier, were accordingly directed to co-operate with the four members of the Faculté. This Commission was appointed on the 12th of March; on the 11th of August the same year they presented a Report, signed by all nine Commissioners. They had decided, for reasons which are not stated in the report, to make their observations on the magnetic treatment as practised, not by Mesmer himself, but by his friend and disciple D'Eslon. The Report commences with a description of the methods employed to set the hypothetical fluid in motion, methods which D'Eslon had borrowed without substantial change from Mesmer. In the middle of a large room was placed a circular tub, called the *baquet*, of considerable dimensions. The report does not mention the internal arrangement of the *baquet*, but we learn from Puységur (whose book, *Du Magnétisme Animal*, has as a frontispiece to its second edition a picture of a *baquet*, of the size of a large bath, with patients sitting round it) that it was filled with bottles "arrangées entr'elles d'une manière particulière," and covered with water up to a certain height.[1] In the lid of the *baquet* were several holes, through each of which passed an iron rod connecting with the interior, and bent in such a way that the patients, who sat round in rows, could apply the point of the rod to any part of their persons. The patients were tied together by a cord which passed round the circle, and sometimes another chain was formed by holding hands. A pianoforte in the corner of the room played various airs during the performance; and sometimes there was singing. The operator carried an iron rod, ten or twelve inches long.

The Report then describes the scenes which ensued as the charm worked: there were violent movements, profuse sweating, spitting, often of blood, vomiting, etc., piercing cries, hiccoughs, immoderate laughter, and extraordinary and long-continued attacks of convulsions. This was called the *crisis*,

[1] Puységur, *Mémoires pour servir*, vol. i. p. 9. A fuller description of the *baquet* is given by another writer of this time, an Englishman named Bell, in his book on the *Principles of Animal Electricity and Magnetism* (London, 1792). See below, chap. viii.

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and was supposed to be beneficial in accelerating and guiding the course of the disease to a successful issue. The crisis was frequently succeeded by the collapse of the patient from sheer exhaustion into a lethargic condition.

The Commissioners conceived that there would be little profit in attempting to study the curative effects of the treatment, because of the extreme difficulty and uncertainty which always attend the purely empirical method in medicine, so much so that even if cures could be demonstrated they would prove little, since they might be attributed with equal plausibility to Nature or to the imagination of the patient. Moreover, to press these questions too closely might annoy the distinguished sufferers who thronged M. D'Eslon's *clinique*. They resolved, therefore, to confine themselves to the search for evidence of the new physical force which was claimed as the agent for the effects observed. They found, of course, little difficulty in demonstrating that no such evidence was forthcoming; and that, as a matter of fact, those effects could be produced by the aid of the imagination alone. A single illustration must suffice of their method of experiment. The veteran Franklin—he was then in his seventy-eighth year—was unable to attend the meetings in Paris. But D'Eslon came down to his house at Passy, bringing with him a suitable subject. A tree was "magnetised"; the subject, a boy of twelve years, was brought into the garden with his eyes blindfolded. He was then introduced successively to four trees, which stood at varying distances from the magnetised tree; the characteristic phenomena of the crisis developed themselves with unusual rapidity, and he collapsed in a swoon at the fourth, without having approached within twenty-four feet of the tree actually magnetised.

The Commissioners concluded that the magnetic fluid could not be perceived by any of the senses, and that its existence could not be inferred from any effects observed either in themselves or in any of the patients examined. And they pointed out, further, that the methods employed by D'Eslon and Mesmer in their treatment were liable to cause serious mischief to the patients themselves and, by imitation, to others. Further, in a confidential report to the Minister they emphasised the dangerous consequences which might result from the spread of these practices, and recommended their legal suppression.

The Report signed five days later by four members of the *Société royale de Médecine* was to the same effect, but pre-

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sented with less literary grace. One member, however, of this second Commission submitted a Minority Report.[1] M. de Jussieu began by suggesting that the Commission had perhaps acquiesced in too narrow an interpretation of their mandate. "Sans remonter à une théorie peut-être trop sublime," it appeared to him that it was within the scope of that mandate at least to verify the physiological facts alleged, to endeavour to ascertain their proximate causes, and the possible utility of the medical treatment which they had witnessed. And to be able to pronounce decisive judgment on these points, it was essential that the mere observation of a crowd of patients passing through the wild convulsions of the magnetic crisis should be supplemented by experiments and observations on individual cases, with a view of disentangling the complicated relations of cause and effect. This M. de Jussieu, so far as circumstances would permit, had endeavoured to do. And one of the observations which he records is of considerable interest. He had seen on several occasions a young man pass through the crisis, then become silent, and walk up and down the hall, touching and magnetising the other patients. When he returned to his normal state he remembered nothing of what had passed, and no longer knew how to magnetise.[2] In this incidental observation—not the less valuable because the observer altogether failed to realise its significance—we have the first indication of the somnambulic trance, the master fact alike in the Animal Magnetism of the first half of last century and in the Hypnotism of to-day.

But the experiences which most interested M. de Jussieu were those which seemed to indicate action at a distance, independently of the patient's imagination. On several occasions he states that he succeeded in provoking or directing the course of the crisis by merely pointing his finger or an iron rod towards the patients without their knowledge, *i.e.* behind the back; or in the case of a blind patient, towards the epigastrium at a distance of six feet. M. de Jussieu appears to have been a careful and critical observer, and to have been on his guard against obvious sources of error in the experiments; but the conditions under which they were made, generally in the large hall in the midst of a crowd of patients and medical men, were clearly not such as to admit of accurate observation. Such as they were, however, he thinks himself justified in deducing

[1] *Rapport de l'un des Commissaires chargés par le Roi de l'examen du Magnétisme Animal.* Paris, 1784. [2] *Rapport*, p. 15.

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from them the possible existence of a fluid or agent which can exercise a sensible influence on the human body at a distance. This fluid he provisionally identifies with Animal Heat. But the Animal Heat of which he speaks is not the radiant energy with which we are familiar, the result of chemical action, and capable of affecting the mercury in a thermometer. It is the principle of life itself, the special vital modification of the universal energy, which in its material manifestation he identifies with electricity. De Jussieu points out that "Animal Heat" conforms to the same laws as electricity, it constantly seeks equilibrium, it radiates preferably from points (the finger or the *baguette*), it produces a feeling of heat in the recipient and of cold in the giver, it surrounds the body as with an atmosphere; and the existence of this *atmosphère particulière* can be occasionally demonstrated to the senses. But, unlike the material energy, the operations of this vital force are directed and intensified by the human will.

In short, de Jussieu's theory of Animal Heat is almost as far-reaching as Mesmer's theory of a universal magnetic fluid. He does not, indeed, make the planets the pivot of his speculations, but he cannot bring himself to leave them out. The really important modification of the theory which de Jussieu introduces is the presentation of the distinctively human element in the case, which he supposed to depend on the will of the operator, but which modern science, more justly perhaps, attributes to the imagination of the patient. It is probable, indeed, that Mesmer himself believed the human will to be the active agency in directing and concentrating his universal fluid; and that, as expressly stated by Puységur, the secret upon which he put so high a price was precisely this recognition of the part played by the will. But it was by his published pronouncements that he elected to be judged, and in these we find no hint of anything beyond an indifferent mechanical or vital agency. Later magnetists, however, followed de Jussieu, and this theory of a specific organic emanation, controlled and directed by the will of the operator, dominated all speculations on the subject throughout Europe for more than two generations, persisting even after Bertrand had formulated the modern doctrine of Suggestion.

Of the significance, as indicating action at a distance, of the facts observed by de Jussieu we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. It is enough to point out here that on these and similar *seemings* (if I may so translate the exotic

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"phenomena") depends not merely the theory of a magnetic or mesmeric fluid, but, in great measure, the whole movement of Modern Spiritualism.

Such were the reports of 1784. It will hardly be thought that the Commissioners failed conspicuously in the discharge of their trust. The spectacle of the hysterical mob of fashionable men and women at the height of the "crisis" round the magnetic tub—*enfer à convulsions*, as someone called it—must have seemed as futile to science as it was repulsive to common sense. It must be remembered, however, that barbarous though the treatment seemed, it was not altogether ill-suited to the medical ideas of the time: even the magnetic crisis might have seemed a merciful alternative to the lancet and the moxa. Indeed, the very violence of the treatment no doubt recommended it to the patients, for the more excessive the remedy the greater seemed its probable efficacy. Puységur, for instance, expressed doubts whether one of his patients was really cured, because he had "not yet experienced the painful crises which, I believe, are necessary to cure so grave a malady."[1]

But whilst it must be admitted that the spectacle offered at first sight little material for scientific investigation—less, probably, than the cures of modern faith-healing—it is still matter for regret that the Commissioners held it no part of their duty to inquire as to the actual curative effects of the treatment. That medical science is not to be judged by results is a dangerous admission for doctors to make. It was liable to, and did in fact provoke, inconvenient retorts.[2] It might have been plausibly urged that, after all, it is the business of the physician to cure, and that if cures were effected—and it is certain that a large section of Parisian Society so believed—it might be profitable to ascertain the cause, even if it should prove to be only the imagination of the sufferer. But these reports of 1784 are remarkable chiefly for what they do not include. None of the more striking and characteristic phenomena of Hypnotism as we know it at the present day appear to have been observed at all. We hear nothing of the varied hallucinations and the muscular feats which any itinerant lecturer can now demonstrate on his subjects: there is no mention of that insensibility to pain, which was to be so bitterly disputed

[1] *Mémoires pour servir*, etc., vol. i. p. 45.

[2] See, for instance, Bergasse, *Considérations sur le Magnétisme Animal*, p. 21. "Ce qui a fait dire à quelques hommes de mauvaise humeur, que la médecine et l'art de guerir sont donc deux sciences qui n'ont rien de commun entr'elles."

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upwards of half a century later, and which has to-day grown to be almost a commonplace. Most singular omission of all, we have but one incidental reference to the condition of induced somnambulism—the eponymous fact of modern Hypnotism. Probably if the Commissioners had observed these things they would have passed them by, as they were passed by in this country more than fifty years afterwards, as being explicable by deliberate deception, and generally as offering no evidence which a responsible inquirer could afford to take into account; but from de Jussieu's careful analysis it seems probable that they were not observed.

The effect of the publication of the reports was what might have been anticipated. Whatever chance the theories of Mesmer might have had of attracting the attention of the scientific world was dissipated. The universal magnetic fluid was definitely classed with the philosopher's stone and the secret of Hermes Trismegistus; and the medical men of the day no doubt stifled whatever unprofessional inclination some of them may have felt to meddle with the new treatment. But the sufferers, aristocratic and other, who had been cured, and the great multitude who believed themselves to have been cured, naturally continued the cult of the *baquet* and the bent iron rods.

The close of the year 1784 saw the publication of a number of replies to the reports by partisans of the new theory, amongst whom D'Eslon himself, another doctor, Bonnefoy, and Bergasse are the most notable. In the course of the same year de Puységur began his cures at Busancy, and circulated a privately printed account of his experiences. M. Jumelin, as we learn from Bailly's report, was also practising magnetism at the time in Paris, and arriving at the same results by a different method. Bergasse, who collaborates with a marquis and dedicates his book to a marchioness, mentions incidentally some half-dozen persons as having a reputation for the cures which they had performed, amongst them another marquis and three counts; he states also that there were societies for the pursuit and study of Animal Magnetism then established in six French provincial cities; also at Turin, Berne, Malta, and in the French West Indies.[1] Societies of Harmony were indeed springing up in various centres, of which that at Strasbourg, founded in 1785 by de Puységur, attained to considerable repute, and published three volumes of Proceedings, from 1786 to 1789. Books and pamphlets on the subject followed

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 135, 136, etc.

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each other in rapid succession until the last-named year. From that date, until the publication in 1807 of Puységur's *Du Magnétisme Animal* inaugurated a new era, very few books on the subject appeared. France during those years had something else to think about, and the atmosphere was not favourable to Societies of Harmony.[1]

At the moment when the Commissioners were incurious and reluctant spectators of the hysterical antics at D'Eslon's *clinique* in Paris, de Puységur, himself a pupil of Mesmer, was obtaining surprising results of quite another kind on his own estate at Busancy, near Soissons. In May, 1784, he writes enthusiastic letters to his brother and to friends at Paris, describing the use which he had made of the wonderful gift of healing which he had derived from Mesmer's teaching. His first patient was the daughter of his bailiff, whom he had cured of toothache. He soon found other patients, and to husband his own powers he magnetised a large tree in his grounds, fastened cords to it, and invited the sufferers to attach themselves. The tree proved a most efficacious *baquet*, and the peasants flocked in from all the country round; on one morning upwards of one hundred and thirty persons availed themselves of its healing virtues. "Every leaf," he writes, "radiates health."

One of his earliest patients was a young peasant of twenty-three, Victor by name, who was confined to his bed with inflammation of the lungs. The invalid, after being magnetised for a quarter of an hour, fell asleep in the operator's arms. In this sleep he began to talk. The somnambulic sleep, as Puységur describes it from his observations on Victor and many other somnambules, is at this time sufficiently familiar. It is important to remark that its most characteristic feature —a feature for which Puységur was apparently not prepared— the complete oblivion on waking of all that had happened in the sleep, seems to have appeared from the outset, as we have already noted in the observations of de Jussieu.

Of other phenomena described by the early magnetists many were grouped under the general name of *rapport*. The magnetic subject could hear no voice but that of the operator,

[1] Deleuze, *Histoire Critique du Magnétisme Animal*, vol. i. pp. 427, 428, explains the discredit into which Animal Magnetism fell during the last decade of the eighteenth and the opening years of the nineteenth century as partly due to the fact that many prominent disciples of Mesmer afterwards became patrons of Cagliostro. This may have no doubt contributed to the result. But there is hardly need to go beyond the cause assigned in the text. Probably no one in France during those years had much leisure for writing of books in any department of thought.

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could feel no touch, and obey no influence but his. But his influence would be felt and obeyed when expressed not only by speech or gesture, but even by silent will—and this sometimes when the operator was in another room, with a thick wall intervening. It was this *rapport*, as shown by the unreceptiveness of the subject to all alien impressions, that was regarded by the writers of this date as the surest test of the true magnetic sleep.[1]

Further, the somnambule would diagnose his own maladies with greater skill than his physician, and would prescribe with more confidence and with happier results. And he would thus diagnose and prescribe with equal success not merely for his own ailments, but for those of other patients introduced to him by the magnetiser. He would predict also, with the most minute accuracy, the date of a future epileptic seizure, or other crisis in his malady, and the precise term of the treatment. Tardy de Montravel describes how one of his somnambules walked about the town with her eyes fast closed in the magnetic sleep, as easily as if she was wide awake; she could see, he writes, without eyes, and hear without ears. He relates further how she would tell the nature of an object by placing it to the pit of the stomach.[2]

As to the explanation of these phenomena, the curative effects of magnetism, the crisis itself, the manifestations of silent willing, and of the *rapport* generally, seem to have been attributed by all the animal magnetists of this period to the effluence of a sensible fluid. Some somnambules could see the fluid radiating as a brilliant shaft of light from the person of the operator,[3] from trees, and other living

[1] See *e.g.* Puységur's reply to those who inquired of him how they should recognise the magnetic state: "Rien n'est plus aisé que de s'en apercevoir: il ne doit d'abord avoir d'analogie avec aucun autre que celui qui l'a magnetisé, il ne doit répondre et n'obéir qu'à lui" (*Mémoires pour servir*, vol. i. p. 192). It would seem that observations which were held to indicate a special relation between magnetist and subject were made very early in the practice of Animal Magnetism, though owing to the sudden break, already referred to, in the published records of these early years, information on the point is somewhat scanty. Puységur's book, from which the above extract is taken, though not published until long after, was apparently in great part written shortly after the experiments which it recounts, *i.e.* before the Revolution. But the question of the exact date of the origin of the belief in *rapport* is not of so much importance as some writers have supposed in its bearing on the reality, or rather non-reality, of the phenomena so explained. In the induced trance the observer always finds what he looks for; and the idea of a reciprocal influence between physician and patient is, as shown in the preceding chapter, at least as old as the Sympathetic System.

[2] *Essai sur la Théorie du Somnambulisme Magnétique* (London, November, 1785), pp. 64, 65.

[3] An occasional device for the frontispiece of books on the subject of animal magnetism is a gentleman in evening dress, with dotted lines proceeding from his eyes and fingers and impinging upon the person of a lady seated in an armchair.

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objects, and would note differences in colour and brightness according to the diverse sources. There was a magnetic effluence from the sun, and yet another, differing in glory, from the earth. Iron and glass would conduct and even augment the magnetic current, but wax or copper dispersed it, and silver reflected it back on the rod. Mesmer had already stated that the fluid was reflected by a mirror, but Tardy bettered this observation. It was not the glass of the mirror, which was already proved to act as a conductor, but the metal backing which operated in the reflection.[1]

So again the fluid could be seen in passing into water and milk. The substance under such treatment would become luminous; and magnetised milk could be retained by a stomach which would at once reject all other nourishment. The tree which Puységur had magnetised retained its virtues long after the operator had left for Strasbourg, and patients continued to resort to it and experience the crisis and the healing influence. Puységur goes further than Tardy de Montravel, and identifies the fluid with the "dephlogisticated air"—then a new discovery—which is given out by plants under the rays of the sun, and finds in it the active principle of vegetable as well as animal life. He even extends its influence to the mineral kingdom, and points to the "revivification" of metals by phosphorus as a probable instance of its action. Puységur's science, no doubt, was a little out of date even then, for in 1784 the new chemical conceptions of Lavoisier had captured Paris, if they had not yet reached Strasbourg and Soissons. But in the matter of animal magnetism Puységur, I think, showed himself the better philosopher of the two. With the facts and "seemings" above described before him, it was not perhaps less reasonable for Puységur to believe in a magnetic fluid than for Priestley to believe in phlogiston. Puységur was not indeed a man of wide learning or conspicuous ability, but he was a good soldier and an honest man, and he faithfully described what he saw. Any board-school child can learn now that both he and Priestley were misled by a false theory; but even Lavoisier might have added to his laurels by studying the one set of phenomena with the same clear vision which he turned upon the other. The generations which succeeded were the poorer for the lost opportunity.

Yet another theory of the physical forces at work in the induced trance was advanced by a medical man who rejected the term "Animal Magnetism" altogether, and whose ob-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

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servations incidentally furnish perhaps the best evidence to be found in the literature of the period for some new mode of transmission of ideas and sensations. J. H. Désiré Pététin, a doctor at Lyons, was perpetual president of the medical society of that city, and had held several public apppointments from the Government. He published in 1808 *Électricité Animale*, describing observations which he had made for many years past on several cases of spontaneous catalepsy. The disease is, of course, sufficiently rare, and it is, as Bertrand subsequently pointed out, a little remarkable that a single provincial practitioner should have come across no less than eight cases in one district. But the phenomena which Pététin's subjects presented were more remarkable still. In the cataleptic state the patient generally remains motionless, and gives often hardly any sign of life at all, pulse and respiration being alike almost imperceptible. Pététin found that his patients, though they would show no signs of intelligence if questions were directed in the usual way to their ears, would answer either by voice or gesture if the speaker addressed himself to the pit of the stomach, the tips of the fingers, or sometimes even the toes. Not only so, but they would appear to taste, smell, and even see with those parts of the body, even when strict precautions were taken to exclude the intervention of the normal organs of sense. Pététin gives details of several occasions on which, due precautions being taken, his patients were able to describe medals, letters, playing cards, and other small objects placed under the bedclothes on the epigastric region, or even hidden in the pockets of the interlocutor.[1] It is not necessary to consider in detail the explanation which M. Pététin offers of these curious manifestations. It is again a purely physical one, and rests on a theory of Animal Electricity which, from our standpoint, does not differ essentially from the hypothesis of Animal Magnetism. His observations afforded him abundant proof that the phenomena depended on electrical action. Thus he found that the most convenient way to speak to the patient was for the interlocutor to place one hand on the stomach (duly covered with clothes) and to address his remarks to the finger-tips of his free hand. The human body being of course a conductor, the patient would then hear and reply. The same results would follow if the operator stood at the remote end of a chain of persons holding each other's hands, of whom the last only touched

[1] Some of the experiments are quoted in *Phantasms of the Living*, vol. ii. pp. 345–7.

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the patient. But if a stick of wax were placed in the circuit, communication at once ceased. Again, the patient would not hear music played close to her by any person not actually touching her. But if the performer were connected with the patient by a moistened thread, she would hear music even in a distant part of the house, and would respond to questions addressed to the far end of the thread.

The experiments in "seeing" with the pit of the stomach on one occasion, Pététin tells us, so amazed and affrighted the spectators that calm was not restored until, by showing that objects wrapped up in wax or silk could not be "seen," he satisfied them that the phenomena had a natural cause, and were not due to the intervention of demons.

The spectators of these marvels were not always so easily satisfied. A *religieuse*, the aunt of another patient, could not understand why the physician should place the fingers of one hand on the patient's stomach and mutter to the fingers of his other hand. She accused him of sorcery; and when, to clear up the matter, he placed her rosary, unseen by the patient, where his fingers had been, and the patient described it correctly, the poor lady's suspicions became so acute that she could not be content until by direct inquiry—addressed, of course, to the same region of her niece's person—she had ascertained that the sufferer still retained her hold on the Christian verities.

Another figure of importance in the early history of Animal Magnetism is J. P. F. Deleuze, who since 1795 had held the post of Assistant Naturalist at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, and in 1828 was appointed Librarian of the Museum of Natural History. He had first witnessed the magnetic treatment in 1785 at a friend's house. Thereafter he continued to practise and observe as opportunity offered; but his first published work on the subject, his *Histoire Critique du Magnétisme Animal*, did not appear until 1813. Deleuze, though his scientific training and native common sense preserved him from the extravagances into which some of the earlier followers of Mesmer had fallen, was still firmly convinced of the magnetic theory. We miss, indeed, the fine cosmic flavour which distinguished the writings of Mesmer himself, and some of his immediate disciples. For him Animal Magnetism is no longer "un rapprochement de deux sciences connues, l'Astronomie et la Médecine."[1] But he is convinced of the existence of the magnetic fluid, on the word of all the somnambules whom he had consulted. Many

[1] Mesmer, *Précis historique*, etc., 1781, p. 2.

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had seen the fluid raying from the operator's fingers; some had smelt it, or perceived its effects in their own persons. Moreover, Deleuze had satisfied himself, by direct experiment, of the existence and physical properties of the fluid. It is not, he points out, apparently identical with the electric fluid, though both are probably modifications of a universal medium. It has many analogies with nerve-force. It forms an atmosphere round each of us, which does not make its presence continually felt, only because it is necessary, for any sensible effect to be produced, that it should be concentrated and directed by the will. How it is that the will directs the fluid, we know as little as how our will moves our own organism. *C'est un fait primitif:* we cannot go behind it.

It is in accordance with this conception of Animal Magnetism, as a definite physical agent, that Deleuze attributes painful effects to it in some diseases. Generally speaking, it has a tonic action, and may be usefully employed when stimulating agents are indicated. But when the system is already irritated and excited, as by poisons, for example, he finds that the effect of magnetism is to increase the irritation and the suffering, and frequently to bring on convulsions. Again, in many diseases where it can be usefully employed its first effect is generally to increase the pain and accelerate the crisis.

So far, it will be seen, no theories of a transcendental nature have been advanced. If the somnambule can see without eyes and hear without ears—a fact of which Deleuze has no manner of doubt—it is, according to him, because the impressions from without are conveyed directly by the magnetic fluid, a medium of extreme tenuity, to the brain without the intervention of the external organs or even the sensory nerves.[1] The same explanation will apply to the supersensible influence of the operator on the subject, and to the subject's perception of diseases in himself or in those placed in *rapport* with him. Deleuze, relying indeed partly on his own observations, but mainly on those of others, has as little doubt of the reality of such supersensible phenomena as he has of their explanation by material causes.

Puységur, again, expressly repudiates any attempt at a transcendental explanation. It was said in Parisian Society that his subject Madeleine could divine people's thoughts. Puységur characterises the statement as absurd. In obeying his silent will she simply acts "as an animated magnet." His will, directing the magnetic fluid, moves her organism

[1] *Histoire Critique*, second edition, vol. i. pp. 189, 200, etc.

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in the same way that his will, directing the nerve currents, acts on his own body. The effect in each case is a purely physical one.[1] Pététin, again, gently ridicules those who believe in clairvoyance at a distance;[2] and the faculty of prevision, on which some observers had laid so much stress, is, Deleuze points out, susceptible of explanation by physiological causes. The patient's previsions are concerned, for the most part, with the course of his own malady; and he could in such a case predict correctly, because in the magnetic trance he had a wider and more accurate knowledge of his own bodily processes and of their probable results.[3]

But it is not easy to explain the manifestations exclusively in physical terms without exercising a rigid discrimination amongst the marvels reported. Tardy de Montravel is inclined to ascribe the clairvoyance of external objects and of the interior of the human organism, and the foreseeing of the future, to a sixth sense, which he regards as at once the source and the sum of all the other partial senses. He further identifies it with the instinct of animals, and with the nerve soul or psychic body of other writers—the intermediary between the spiritual part of man and his gross external organism.

Moreover, the manifestation afterwards so well known as "travelling clairvoyance" was not unknown at this time. Puységur quotes[4] a letter written to him in March, 1785, from a gentleman in Nantes, in which a case of the kind is described, but not apparently at first hand, as having occurred at Nantes six months previously. The subject in this case, a young girl, followed the movements of the magnetiser, her uncle, when he left his chateau to go into the town, and was able to report to those around her correctly whom he met, and what he was saying and doing. It was not easy to find a fluidic explanation to fit such facts, if they were to be admitted at all.

Again, as we shall see hereafter,[5] there were from the beginning of the movement mystics who claimed that the true interpretation of the trance was to be found in the spiritual world; and Deleuze himself later appears to have given a partial assent to their views.

[1] *Mémoires pour servir*, pp. 180, 229, etc. [2] *Électricité Animale*, p. 85.
[3] As stated in the next chapter, this is probably not the true explanation of the "prediction" of fits and other crises.
[4] *Du Magnétisme Animal*, pp. 225–30. Paris, 1807. [5] Below, chap. vi.

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CHAPTER V

THE SECOND FRENCH COMMISSION

SUCH were the conceptions of Animal Magnetism which up till 1820 or thereabouts held the field as an explanation of the phenomena of the somnambulic trance, and which, even after a juster and more philosophic view had been propounded, continued to flourish for many years, and still linger not merely in the remoter bypaths of human experience. The inauguration of a new era in the science is due to Alexandre Bertrand, a young Paris physician, who, in 1823, published his *Traité du Somnambulisme.* In this, and another work published in 1826, *Du Magnétisme Animal en France*, he reviews the work and theories of his predecessors, and puts forward an explanation of the multifarious phenomena which does not greatly differ from that held at the present time.

He begins by relating the artificial trance with spontaneous noctambulism, the somnambulic states associated with certain diseases, and the states of ecstasy epidemic from time to time in religious communities. The various phenomena observed by his predecessors—the magnetic crisis; the sensations of heat and cold; the influence of the *baquet* and the iron rod; the tree at Busancy; the stream of light seen by Tardy's somnambules; the conduction by iron, the reflection from mirrors, the dissipation by copper; the effects of wax, silk, wet cords, etc., as observed by Pététin—the whole machinery on which the earlier writers relied as demonstrating the existence of a fluid — celestial, magnetic, or electric— he sweeps away in a word by attributing the results to the imagination of the subject, preternormally alive to the least suggestion, by word, look, gesture, or even unexpressed thought, from the operator. It is not necessary to follow Bertrand in detail through the steps of his argument. His theory of suggestion is the modern theory, and by it, as we know, are explained most of the phenomena which to the

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earlier observers appeared most inexplicable. Indeed, it is surprising how modern Bertrand's book is. It might have issued within the last decade from the *Hôpital Civil* at Nancy. It would need but a slight change in names, dates, and other unessential particulars to make it fit the times. For the magnetic crisis we should now substitute the three classic stages of the trance as observed in Paris, and for the names of Pététin and Deleuze those, say, of Charcot and Gilles de la Tourette. The transfer of diseases, the influence of magnets and metals, the presence of a nerve atmosphere have all been demonstrated as conclusively within recent years at the Salpêtrière or the Charité as they were more than a hundred years ago at Busancy or Lyons; whilst the most brilliant results of Tardy de Montravel have been outshone in modern Paris by Dr. Luys, Colonel de Rochas, and M. Baraduc. For modern scientific appliances have enabled these later observers to claim that they can photograph the fluid which the earlier writers could only take on trust from their somnambules. And to complete the parallel, the scientific world, and the mass of medical men in this country, at any rate, are hardly more concerned about the whole business than they were sixty or a hundred and twenty years ago. As has been said of another subject—

> "*Hic liber est in quo quærit sua dogmata quisque*
> *Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.*"

It is no doubt this uncertainty—or rather this certainty that the observations will vary with the preconceptions of the observer—which has throughout the last three or four generations repelled the great majority of thinking men from the investigation. That Bertrand himself, had he lived, would have done much to dispel this prejudice and to win recognition for the subject among his scientific contemporaries seems probable; his premature death in 1831, in his thirty-sixth year, was an irremediable loss.

But for our immediate purposes even the revolution which Bertrand essayed in the attitude of science to the subject of artificial somnambulism is of less importance than his views on the supersensible phenomena of the trance. For this free critic of his predecessors' results, amongst so much else which he destroyed, left this part of their observations intact. Partly from his own experiments, but mainly from facts communicated to him by other observers and from authentic records in the past, he found himself constrained to believe

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that Pététin and the rest had been justified in their belief in action at a distance, and in the existence, in certain cases, of a faculty of acquiring information which had not passed through any known sensory channel. As may be inferred from the critical character of his mind, Bertrand had not come to this conclusion lightly. He was, of course, keenly alive to the influence of the imagination in such cases, and devised various experiments in order to exclude such influence. That he seems to have been less alive to the possibility of hyperæsthesia is, of course, to be regretted; but such experiments as the following can hardly be thought to be capable of explanation by that cause. Bertrand heads the chapter from which this extract is taken, "Communication sympatique des symptômes des maladies." He records three experiments on somnambules who had the faculty of describing correctly the diseases from which other persons were suffering.

To test this power he brought to the first somnambule a patient of his own whom she had never seen. The chief affection in this case was asthma. The somnambule, after being placed in *rapport* with the invalid, shortly presented all the symptoms of a severe asthmatical attack; she then proceeded to describe with great accuracy various minor ailments and pains, and finally, a particular skin affection, the existence of which was almost certainly known to no one but the patient and her physician.

He made two similar observations on another somnambule. The second I give in his own words:—

"Voici une troisième observation faite sur la même somnambule, et qui ne paraîtra pas moins remarquable que les précédentes. Je n'avais pas préparé cette épreuve: le hasard me la fournit. J'étais auprès de la somnambule, que je magnétisais endormie sur son lit, quand je vis entrer un de mes amis accompagné d'un jeune homme blessé depuis peu de temps en duel, et qui avait reçu une balle dans la tête; il était encore malade de sa blessure, et venait pour consulter. On me le dit à voix basse, sans parler du genre de la blessure; et comme la somnambule parut disposée à donner la consultation qu'on lui demandait, je la mis en rapport avec le blessé, et me bornai à lui demander de déclarer ce qu'il avait.[1] Elle parut chercher un instant, puis elle dit en s'adressant le parole à elle-même: "Non, non, ce n'est pas possible; si un homme avait eu une balle dans la tête, il serait mort."—"Eh bien!" lui dis-je, "que voyez-vous donc?"—"Il faut *qu'il* se trompe," me dit-elle; "*il*

[1] Je n'ai pas besoin de dire avec quel soin on doit éviter de faire aux somnambules des questions qui puissent leur indiquer les réponses qu'ils doivent faire.

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me dit que monsieur a une balle dans la tête."[1] Je l'assurai que ce qu'elle disait était vrai, et lui demandai si elle pouvait voir par où la balle était entrée, et quel trajet elle avait parcouru. La somnambule réfléchit encore un instant, puis ouvrit la bouche, et indiqua avec le doigt que la balle etait entrée par la bouche, et avait pénétré jusqu'à la partie postérieure du cou; ce qui était encore vrai. Enfin elle poussa l'exactitude jusqu'à indiquer quelques-unes des dents qui manquaient dans la bouche, et que la balle avait brisées.

Cette observation ne me laissa rien à désirer, puisque d'ailleurs j'étais sûr que la somnambule n'avait eu d'avance aucune connaissance de la personne qu'on lui avait amenée, et qu'elle n'avait pas ouvert les yeux depuis l'instant où le blessé était entré dans la chambre. Au reste, quand elle l'aurait vu, la balle étant entrée dans la bouche sans faire aucune lésion aux tégumens extérieurs, il lui aurait été impossible d'acquérir d'un coup-d'œil toutes les connaissances qu'elle montra sur la nature de la blessure.[2]

Bertrand cites a few observations of his own indicating action at a distance; but he admits that what indications he has himself seen of this faculty, though sufficient to justify him in giving due credence to the observations recorded by other persons on whose accuracy he could rely, were not in themselves conclusive. His explanation of the phenomenon is the precise reverse of Puységur's. When the somnambule responds to the passes of an unseen magnetiser, the effect is attributed not to a physical, but to a mental cause—*transmission des pensées.*

He cites, moreover, the testimony of several contemporaries, amongst them two Paris physicians of some note, Georget, who had been converted by what he had seen from materialism to a belief in the existence of the soul, and Rostan, the author of the article on "Animal Magnetism" in the new *Dictionary of Medicine*, a physician of Aix, Despine, and one or two others, all of whom claimed to have witnessed phenomena—reading with the fingers or toes, the back of the head, etc.—which compelled belief in some preternormal faculty of vision. Unfortunately in none of the cases cited are the particulars given sufficient to enable us to judge whether all sources of error were excluded.[3]

It will be seen that the phenomena of somnambulism were exciting considerable attention in the medical circles of Paris at this time. From 1820 onwards, indeed, there had been several exhibitions in the Paris hospitals, designed to illustrate

[1] "Il"=not the patient, but the inner voice which seemed to the somnambule to speak from her stomach. [2] *Traité*, etc., pp. 232-4.
[3] A. Bertrand, *Du Magnétisme Animal en France*, p. 454.

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action at a distance and insensibility to pain. If the results in the first case were dubious, the demonstrations of anæsthesia were not lacking in cogency. The insensibility of the patients was frequently tested by the application of moxas. The moxa, we learn, produced burns, the exact dimensions of which are given, involving the whole thickness of the skin. The unhappy patients betrayed no sign of consciousness. These experiments are amongst the earliest indications of the recognition of anæsthesia as an accompaniment of the induced trance.[1]

But at this time (1820–1825) not only the medical world, but Paris in general, and indeed the whole country, were busied with the marvels of the magnetic trance. A bi-monthly journal, the *Annales du Magnétisme Animal*, had been started in Paris in 1814, which after a short interruption reappeared as the *Bibliothèque du Magnétisme Animal*. This came to an end in 1819, and was replaced by the *Archives du Magnétisme Animal*, under the editorship of Baron d'Henin de Cuvillers. There were, moreover, professional clairvoyantes in plenty, as we learn from casual references in writings of this period, who seem to have found in the practice of clairvoyant diagnosis and treatment of disease a lucrative occupation. The Abbé Faria claimed that he had entranced more than five thousand persons.[2] Nor was the interest in it confined to France. The Academy of Berlin in 1821 proposed a prize for the best essay on the subject; a prize for which Bertrand would have contended, but unluckily his essay arrived too late.[3] In Russia a Commission appointed by the Emperor in 1815 had reported in its favour. In Prussia and Denmark the efficacy of magnetism had been recognised, and its exercise confined by law to members of the medical profession. In fact, throughout Northern Europe, but especially in Germany, the new treatment seems to have been widely practised. It was only the land of the immortal Newton "qui dans la culture des sciences, suivant la marche sévère de l'ex-

[1] It is not a little remarkable that at a time when anæsthetic drugs were wholly unknown the induction of anæsthesia in the trance appears not to have attracted the attention of the early magnetists. They do, indeed—*e.g.* in the Reports of 1784 and the discussions which followed—take note of the numbness in the limbs which occasionally accompanied the trance, but this was generally attributed to the constrained attitude or, as by Deleuze, to the fact that the lower limbs were generally not included in the passes, and thus escaped the vitalising influence of the fluid (*Histoire critique*, vol. i. p. 149). This singular omission is, of course, but another illustration—if another is needed—of the fact that in Hypnotism the observer finds what he looks for.

[2] Bertrand, *Du Magnétisme Animal*, p. 248. [3] *Ibid.*, Preface, p. 8.

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perience et de l'observation, a dédaigné jusqu'à présent de s'occuper de magnétisme."[1]

On the 11th October, 1825, a young doctor, P. Foissac, who had for some time past occupied himself with the study of the somnambulic trance, wrote to the Medical Section of the Royal Academy of Medicine at Paris asking them to appoint a Commission to investigate the subject anew, and offering to lend a somnambule for the purpose of experiment. The Section proceeded in the matter with due circumspection. They appointed a committee of five to consider the question whether it was suitable for the Academy to concern itself with the question or no. On the 13th December, 1825, this committee reported by the mouth of M. Husson, and recommended the Section to undertake the inquiry. The reading of the preliminary report was followed by a heated discussion, which was prolonged over the next three sittings. There is no need to analyse the debate in detail. The arguments of the opponents are by now sufficiently familiar. In the course of the fourscore years which have intervened they have been reproduced, it may be hazarded, with local modifications in the annals of every medical society in the civilised world. It was pointed out that Mesmer was a quack, and Puységur a man without scientific education; from Germany and the Scandinavian countries, where the doctrine was most rife, had notoriously proceeded too many extravagant systems and erroneous beliefs, alike in medicine and philosophy. Some of the speakers had studied the subject for years, and were convinced that all the phenomena, "or at least nine-tenths of them," were due to illusion and fraud; it would be beneath the dignity of the Academy to undertake the inquiry, for the subject was an altogether unprofessional one, and had fallen into the hands of quacks and charlatans, who made a lucrative living out of their alleged clairvoyance; moreover, it was a very difficult subject to investigate, since so many of the phenomena depended on the good faith of the subject; and if all that was said of it were proved true, it would still not be of the smallest use in medicine—let the physicists or somebody else take it up. Last, and most singular argument of all, there were such grave moral dangers arising from the abuse of the magnetic influence that it would be most undesirable for any responsible body of trained investigators to have anything to do with such a disagreeable business.

The supporters of the motion had, as may be imagined,

[1] Foissac, *Rapports et Discussions* (Paris, 1833), p. 41.

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the best of the argument; they had also the majority of the votes, and the recommendation was finally carried by thirty-five to twenty-five. The Commission commenced its inquiry at once, but owing to various causes did not actually present its Report until June, 1831, five and a half years after its appointment.

The Commission reported, in effect, that the alleged phenomena were genuine, and in particular that the peculiar state called somnambulism, though of comparatively rare occurrence, was well authenticated. Time had not permitted them to investigate with precision the therapeutic relations of magnetism, but they had seen enough to satisfy them of its importance as an adjunct to medical science.

But the most interesting and most controvertible of the Commission's findings related to the supernormal aspect of the phenomena. They reported that the characteristic effects of the magnetic state could be produced in the patient without his knowledge, by the mere will of the operator; that certain clairvoyants could distinguish objects placed before them when their eyes were fast closed and normal vision was impossible; that they could occasionally diagnose the diseases of other persons with whom they were placed in *rapport;* and that they could also predict with great exactness more or less distant pathological changes in their own organisms.

Unfortunately the extracts from the detailed experiments given in the Report furnish little support for any of these conclusions, except, indeed, the last. The power of somnambules to predict to the minute the occurrence, even weeks ahead, of epileptic crises and the like, seems fairly well established. But it is doubtfully to be explained, as even Bertrand essays to explain it, as an inference from a quickened perception of organic processes. It is in most cases probably not an inference at all, still less a prevision. What really happens, no doubt, is that the patient subconsciously sets his organism to explode in epileptic crisis, mania, and so on, and himself subconsciously attends to the fulfilment of the prediction. It is thus analogous to the carrying out of an hallucination suggested to him by the operator—as we have seen in recent times at Nancy—with this difference, that the suggestion is given by the patient to himself. But the false interpretation placed on phenomena of this kind undoubtedly contributed much in the early days to the disrepute of Magnetism in scientific circles.

As regards the operation of the magnetiser's will without the knowledge of the patient, several observations are quoted,

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of which the best are two cases in which Foissac himself, concealed in another room and at a distance of ten or twelve feet from the subject, with two closed doors intervening in one case and one in the other, succeeded in inducing the sleep in a few minutes.

The experiments on which the proof of vision without eyes were supposed to rest are obviously inconclusive. The subjects' eyes (two persons were found to possess the power of seeing under these conditions) were closed, so that the lashes interlaced, and the eyelids were seen by all present to be pressed together. On one occasion the lids were held down by the fingers of one of the experimenters. Under these conditions the somnambules—for they were apparently in a genuine somnambulic trance—could describe, though not without some difficulty, objects placed before them. But it was observed that the eyeballs moved, as if following the object, as in the act of normal vision. Moreover, the subject failed to read with the pit of the stomach, or through a closed envelope; and the intervention of a screen or a bandage over the eyes interrupted the performance. There can be no reasonable doubt that the "clairvoyants" in these experiments—who may have been perfectly innocent of intentional deception in the matter—did actually see with their fleshly eyes, and in a perfectly normal though somewhat unusual way. One of the committees of the Society for Psychical Research had the opportunity in 1884 of experimenting with a "clairvoyant" youth, "Dick, the pit lad," whose performances were conducted in much the same way, except that in the later case the eyes were bandaged in a manner which to the untrained spectator seemed completely effectual. Dr. Hodgson subsequently, with his eyes bandaged in the same way, and under like conditions, succeeded in seeing objects held up before him.[1]

On the whole, it cannot be said that, apart from their unanimous testimony to the reality and importance of the phenomena in general, this second French Commission added much to our knowledge of the subject, or much, it is to be feared, to their own reputation. Their observations were few and inadequate, and their conclusions were not carefully framed, nor in all cases well established. It is noteworthy that though the elements of a philosophical explanation of the whole problem had been put forward some few years previously by Bertrand, with much literary skill and abundance of apt and cogent illustrations, Bertrand's name

[1] See *Journal of the S. P. R.* for June, 1884.

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is not mentioned in the Report, and his theories are dismissed in a line.

M. Foissac, in publishing the Report,[1] triumphantly pointed out that Magnetism, after being so long a subject of derision, had at last, after a strife of fifty-seven years, been rehabilitated before the first medical society in Europe.

He may be counted happy in that he could not foresee how many rehabilitations, by or in spite of how many learned societies, would be needed before the next fifty-seven years were completed.

[1] *Rapports et discussions de l'Académie Royale de Médecine sur le Magnétisme Animal.* Paris, 1833.

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CHAPTER VI

SPIRITUALISM IN FRANCE BEFORE 1848

ONE of the earliest detailed accounts which we possess of questioning the spirits through the mouth of a somnambule is contained in an extract from some unpublished Journals of the *Société Exégétique et Philantropique* of Stockholm, which is quoted in the *Annales du Magnétisme Animal* by M. Lausanne, in the course of a history of Animal Magnetism.[1] This society, founded in the birthplace of Swedenborg, apparently for the propagation of his doctrines, had addressed in 1788 to the *Société des amis réunis* at Strasbourg a famous "Lettre sur la seul explication satisfaisante des phénomènes du Magnétisme Animal et du somnambulisme déduite des vrais principes fondés dans les connaissances du Créateur de l'homme et de la Nature, et confirmée par l'expérience." True to the principles of its founder, the Strasbourg Society had retorted by insisting on a naturalistic interpretation. Thereupon M. Halldin, of the Swedish Society, replied by another long exposition of the Swedenborgian view, backed up by extracts from journals of trance experiments for a few days in the month of May, 1787. From these journals it would appear that in the presence of several members of the nobility and other persons the wife of a gardener named Lindquist, a woman of forty years of age, when placed in the trance, was controlled on successive days by two different spirits, her own infant daughter and another young child, a former native of the town. These "spirits," in reply to the questions of the bystanders, gave some account of their own lives on earth, described the state of intermediate or probationary existence, *le chemin de milieu*, through which the spirits of the dead had to pass before finally proceeding to their appointed place, expounded the Christian Scriptures, and even entered upon

[1] 1816, No. XXV.

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an abstruse disquisition on the worthlessness in that other world of all man's "natural goodness"—in all this discourse faithfully reproducing the teachings of the Swedish seer. Other somnambules and other "controls" delivered themselves to a like effect. They also prescribed for the diseases of persons present or absent. Asked as to the state of the late King, the spirits replied that he was happy; the late Captain Sparfvenfeldt was reported to be "encore flottant," apparently in the probationary state above described. But the "controls" refused to satisfy a natural curiosity as to the whereabouts of the late Comte de Stenbock, and leave us to the grimmest conjectures.

It is to be noted that the ascription of these somnambulic utterances to spirit intelligences was in the circumstances not merely easy but almost inevitable. The entranced person was in a state obviously differing very widely from either normal sleep or normal wakefulness; in the waking state she herself retained no recollection of what happened in the trance; in the trance she habitually spoke of her waking self in the third person, as of someone else; the intelligence which manifested in the trance obviously possessed powers of expression and intellectual resources in some directions far greater than any displayed by the waking subject. Add to this that the trance intelligence habitually reflected the ideas in general and especially the religious orthodoxy of her interlocutors; that on occasion she showed knowledge of their thoughts and intentions which could not apparently have been acquired by normal means; that she was, in particular, extraordinarily skilful in diagnosing, prescribing for, and occasionally foretelling the course of diseases in herself and others—the proof must have seemed to the bystanders complete.

That without impugning the good faith of the "medium" we can now explain these manifestations without the supposition of an extraneous intelligence is no reflection on the common sense of the earlier investigators. Taught by the experience of more than a century in this particular field and with a wider and more intimate knowledge of allied abnormal states, we can now explain the division of memory, the assumption by the somnambule of an alien personality, and the enlargement in certain directions of the psychic powers, as phenomena directly dependent on changes in the physical basis of consciousness, such as accompany and condition the trance. The unshakeable orthodoxy of the medium is seen to be less significant when we find that

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she is apt equally to reflect the ideas of the magnetist, whether Catholic, Protestant, Rationalist, or, as in the case just cited, Swedenborgian; and, if some of the more marvellous phenomena of the trance are still obscure, they can at least be seen to fall into line with other mundane facts, which do not obviously call for spirit-intervention. But at Stockholm in the eighteenth century such comparisons and inferences were not possible. Even if the members of the Exegetical and Philanthropic Society had started as doubters, they might have been excused for succumbing to the evidence of their senses, as did the young somnambule whose history is preserved for us by Bertrand. The boy was heard in the trance to exclaim—"Mais il n'y a pas de revenans, ce sont des contes. Cependant je les vois, la preuve est entière."[1] Starting, as they apparently did, with a belief in the spirit communings of their famous fellow-citizen, Emanuel Swedenborg, these Stockholm inquirers could hardly fail to see in these later manifestations corroboration of their faith and an earnest of fuller revelations to come.

It was in Germany, as will appear in the next chapter, that the Spiritualist interpretation found most favour. There were many philosophers in that country who welcomed the somnambulic revelations as affording support for mystical beliefs antecedently held on less cogent evidence. In the heated debates which preceded the appointment of the second French Commission there were numerous allusions to the Spiritualists; and Germany and the countries of northern Europe were pointed to as the chief offenders against scientific orthodoxy. But they do not seem to have stood alone; the clairvoyant who saw and conversed in a vision with two great prophets, and when asked to identify them, named Rousseau and Voltaire, must surely have been a Parisian.[2]

In France, however, as we have already seen, not merely by Mesmer and his immediate disciples, but by those who pursued the subject in the next generation, the phenomena of the somnambulic trance were studied as part of the natural sciences. However extravagant the theories which, in some cases, those phenomena were suborned to support, they yet did not pass beyond the limits of the material world. For the great body of investigators the interest in Animal Magnetism lay primarily in its use as a healing power, and secondarily as illustrating the workings of a new physical force. If there were any inquirers who saw in the phenomena indications of something transcending the physical universe,

[1] *Traité du Somnambulisme*, p. 437. [2] Foissac, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

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they remained for the most part inarticulate. They published few books, and contributed no articles to the leading periodicals devoted to Animal Magnetism. Echoes of the Spiritualist beliefs are found, however, from time to time in the early literature of the French magnetists. Even so early as 1787 M. Tardy de Montravel indited a series of letters controverting, in the politest language, the view that in the trance the soul of the somnambule became freed from its fleshly bonds, and soared into the world of real existence. *Per contra* in 1793 Keleph Ben-Nathan, in his *Philosophie Divine*, argued that in somnambulism the spirit of man did indeed hold intercourse with other spirits, but of an infernal order; and that the Spiritualist magnetisers were, in fact, practising that sorcery and divination against which the Israelites had been warned in the Jewish Scriptures.

Some years later Deleuze, in the first volume of his *Histoire Critique*, found it necessary to devote a chapter to an examination of the views of the mystics and to argue at length that a belief in the phenomena of Animal Magnetism was not logically or necessarily associated with such doctrines. Later, in the *Bibliothèque du Magnétisme Animal*, Deleuze defines his own position more precisely.[1] A friend had drawn his attention to the Spiritualist views then widely current in Germany, and asserted his own inclination towards them in preference to the naturalistic explanation adopted generally in France, in deference, as he suggests, to the fashionable philosophy of the day. Deleuze, in his reply, admits that the phenomena of clairvoyance and the like go far to establish the spirituality of the soul and its independence of the material organism, and thereby to destroy the strongest argument that can be adduced against the soul's survival. But he urges various considerations for holding the judgment, so far as relates to anything more than this admission, still in suspense. Spirit-intercourse must, he thinks, at present be regarded as not proven by any manifestation of the somnambulic trance. The phenomena which seem to point in that direction are susceptible of another interpretation.

In his later years, however, Deleuze appears to have been almost converted to the Spiritualistic hypothesis. One Dr. G. P. Billot had been experimenting for many years with various patients of that hysterical type which at that time, as at the present day, appears to have been so common in France. By means of leading questions he readily induced his patients, in the somnambulic trance, to declare that they

[1] Vol. iv. (1818), pp. 1–63.

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were possessed by spirits. The spirits in the case of Billot's subjects proclaimed themselves the guardian angels of the somnambules, through whom they communicated, confessed the Catholic verities, and on occasion, in proof of their claims, made the sign of the cross. All these matters and many more Billot reported at great length to Deleuze, in a correspondence which extended over more than four years, from March, 1829, to August, 1833.[1] At the beginning of the correspondence Deleuze adheres to the position above described. In one of his last letters, however, dated 3rd August, 1833, when he was in his eighty-second year, and within a few months of the complete failure of his mental powers, he writes to his correspondent: "I have unlimited confidence in you, and cannot doubt the truth of your observations. You seem to me destined to effect a change in the ideas generally held on Animal Magnetism. I should like to live long enough to see the happy revolution, and to thank Heaven for having been introduced into the world of angels."

On the strength of this and similar utterances Billot claims Deleuze as a convert to his views. But apart altogether from the effect produced by them on the octogenarian naturalist, Billot's letters are of considerable interest. In the first place, it is clear that the author, though firmly convinced of the truth of his views, was reluctant to publish them—in itself strong proof of the rarity of similar views amongst his countrymen — because of the ridicule and opposition which he foresaw that they would encounter. The correspondence was not, in fact, published until six years later. But it is specially interesting to note that Billot's clairvoyants had on some occasions furnished him with physical phenomena. On the 5th March, 1819, three of the somnambules—one man and two women—were sitting in a row. They were in the "theo-magnetic" state, in which they would see visions, and all of them the same vision. The only other persons present were Dr. Billot himself and a blind woman, who was apparently in the habit of consulting his clairvoyants:—

"Towards the middle of the séance, one of the seeresses exclaimed, 'There is the Dove—it is white as snow—it is flying about the room with something in its beak—it is a piece of paper. Let us pray.' A few moments later she added, 'See, it has let the paper drop at the feet of Madame J——' (the blind woman)."

[1] *Recherches psychologiques . . . ou correspondance sur le magnétisme vital entre un Solitaire et M. Deleuze*, Paris, 1839.

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Dr. Billot saw a paper packet lying at the spot which, on picking it up, he found to exhale a ll. The contents of the packet consisted of three s of bone glued on to small strips of paper, with 'St. Maxime," "St. Sabine," and "Many Martyrs" r written beneath the fragments. The account is ember, 1831.[1]

27th October in the following year, 1820, he somewhat similar occurrence. The same blind come to consult one of his somnambules. In he somnambule said that she saw a maiden hold- anch covered with flowers. Billot remarked that o plants in flower at that season in the country. e blind woman cried out that a spray of flowers en placed on her apron. On examination the oved to be a piece of Cretan thyme. Later the aiden, in answer to the doctor's entreaties, gave iece of the same plant.[2]

idents Billot recounted to Deleuze as proofs spirit-intervention. He cannot, he says, under- is it, indeed, easy of understanding—how the have been brought by Animal Magnetism only.

his reply states that he has just received a visit guished physician, who had had similar experi- of this gentleman's somnambules had frequently material objects; but she never professed to ws with spirits. Deleuze himself finds it easier at these "apports" should be conveyed by mag- than that spirits should have power to move ts.

ondence is of value as showing that physical the kind familiar to modern Spiritualists—the exactly foreshadows the "apports" of flowers witnessed in Mrs. Guppy's presence—occurred in connection with the trance long before 1848. Two or three similar incidents in connection with German clairvoyants are described in the next chapter.

Whilst, however, it was in Germany, in the early part of the last century, that the idea of intercourse with spirits through the medium of an entranced subject first received its full development, yet France contributed, in the remarkable trance utterances recorded by Alphonse Cahagnet, one of its most striking illustrations. We learn from his writings that Cahagnet was familiar with the teachings of Swedenborg,

[1] Vol. ii. p. 8. [2] Vol. ii. p. 6.

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and it is not unlikely that he may have read the articles in the *Annales* from which the account of the Swedish Spiritualists above quoted is taken. And no doubt to both these sources of inspiration we may add the interest evoked by the German clairvoyants, some reports of whose marvellous revelations must have reached Paris. But it is noteworthy that in the Paris of his day Cahagnet seems to have stood almost alone. He belonged to no school; he persuaded few of his contemporaries to share his views of the somnambulist revelations which he recorded; and but for the advent of Modern Spiritualism from America, he would, it may be hazarded, have found few readers. If in the present chapter, therefore, Cahagnet's work is treated at greater length than its historical importance would seem to justify, it is because these trance utterances are at once amongst the most remarkable and the best-attested documents on which the case for Spiritualism depends.

Alphonse Cahagnet describes himself as a simple *ouvrier*. He was, in fact, as we learn from an authoritative account of him in the *Journal du Magnétisme*,[1] originally a journeyman cabinet-maker, and subsequently took up the trade of restoring old furniture. His attention appears to have been attracted to the phenomena of somnambulism about 1845, and thereafter he employed much of his leisure in studying and recording the utterances of various entranced subjects.

In January, 1848, he published at Paris the first volume of his *Arcanes de la vie future dévoilés*, in which he gave an account of communications received through eight somnambules, which purported to proceed from thirty-six persons of various stations, who had died at different epochs, some of them more than two centuries previously. This first volume contained "revelations" of the usual post-Swedenborgian kind about the constitution of the spirit spheres, the occupations of the deceased, the bliss of the after-life, and visions of angelic beings clothed in white, walking on beautiful lawns, in the light of a fairer day than ours.

We should probably be justified in assuming that these accounts of heaven and of the occupations of the spirits therein, with which a large part of the first volume is taken up, had no more remote origin than the medium's own mind, whose workings were no doubt directed, now by memories of lessons learnt in childhood, now by hints of the Swedenborgian philosophy and of the revelations of German clairvoyants received from Cahagnet himself. This first volume

[1] Vol. xiii. p. 340.

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also included personal messages from deceased friends of those persons whom Cahagnet admitted to witness the manifestations. But there is little or nothing to show that these communications did not emanate exclusively from the imagination of the medium, and we are dependent solely upon Cahagnet's good faith and competence for the accuracy of the reports given. Cahagnet appears, however, to have been a man of quite unusual sincerity and teachableness. The criticisms on his earlier work showed him where the evidence was defective; and in the later séances described in his second volume, which was published in January, 1849, he appears to have done his utmost to establish the authenticity of the alleged spirit communications by procuring, wherever possible, the written attestations of the other persons present. The medium in all these later sittings was Adèle Maginot, whom he had known for many years. A natural somnambulist from her childhood, she had, in the first instance, allowed Cahagnet to "magnetise" her, in order that he might put a stop to the spontaneous attacks which were impairing her health. He soon found her an excellent clairvoyant, especially for the diagnosis and cure of diseases. In the later séances, however, which took place in the spring and summer of 1848, Adèle was chiefly consulted by persons who wished for interviews with deceased friends. Cahagnet drew up a statement of the communications made at these sittings, and asked the sitters to sign the statement, indicating how far the particulars given were true or false. These statements, with the signed attestations, are published. In the few cases where the names are not given in full Cahagnet explains that for sufficient reasons the sitters had desired that their names should be withheld from the general public, but that they were at the disposal of any private inquirer who might wish to satisfy himself of the genuineness of the accounts. Of course these reports, which do not profess to be verbatim, do not show what indications the clairvoyant may have received from leading questions or undesigned hints by the sitters.

Cahagnet, indeed, seems to admit a certain amount of editing on his part. His words are:—

"Cet ouvrage est loin d'offrir l'intérêt du roman par son style forcément coupé, accidenté. Aussi conviendrait-il mieux aux amateurs de la science qu'aux lecteurs passionnés des descriptions poétiques de nos romans du jour. *J'ai cherché à rendre le style le plus clair possible en le dépouillant de cet entourage de questions, de scènes étrangères à ce genre de révélations.* Je tiens moins à bien

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écrire qu'à bien persuader. . . . Je suis resté dans les limites de l'austère vérité, du rôle impartial de l'historien, présentant à la philosophie du jour des faits dans toute leur nudité, mais aussi dans toute leur sincérité."[1]

But it is evident from the accounts given that many of the sitters, at any rate, were sceptical, and on their guard against deception. And in some cases it seems clear that no hints received from the sitters could have furnished information. Another possible evidential defect is that though Cahagnet tells us that he has recorded all the somnambule's mistakes as well as all her correct statements,[2] he does not expressly say that he has published the records of every séance. As, however, we have numbered records of forty-six séances in the interval between going to press with the first volume in the autumn of 1847 and the end of August, 1848, twenty-eight of which sittings took place between the 6th of March and the latter date, it may fairly be assumed that the sittings here recorded represent at least a substantial proportion of those which actually took place. Lastly, to complete the enumeration of the more prominent evidential defects, very few dates are given. In this respect also, however, the second volume shows a marked improvement over the first. The ninety-six séances there recorded contain hardly a single date. But of the later séances several are dated, and the rest, from internal evidence, appear to be printed in chronological order. In short, in the whole literature of Spiritualism I know of no records of the kind which reach a higher evidential standard, nor any in which the writer's good faith and intelligence are alike so conspicuous.

The following are a few representative records. In the séance first quoted the sitter, Dejean de la Bastie, Delegate to the Government from the Isle of Bourbon, had come a few days previously and received a personal description of his father, which he acknowledged to be exact with a few trifling exceptions, together with much excellent paternal advice.

No. 141.—M. Dejean de la Bastie, already quoted in Séance 138, desires another apparition. He asks for M. Marie-Joseph-Theodore de Guigné. Adèle sees a man about forty years of age, rather tall, with brown hair. M. Dejean interrupts Adèle by saying that this is not the portrait of the person for whom he asks. We see that this gentleman wishes for perfectly accurate information. At the words "rather tall, with brown hair," he says, "He was tall and not brown-

[1] Vol. ii. p. 233. [2] Vol. ii. p. 126.

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haired." Adèle answers that the person whose appearance she is describing must have the same name and belong to his family, that she is conscious that it is so; but he again asks for this gentleman, and a second person appears. The first remains. "The new-comer," she says, "is thirty years of age and over; he is tall and thin, has dark, flaxen hair, a pale face, with rather sweet, dark blue eyes; a long nose, a mouth that is large rather than small, a long chin. I see he wears a sort of great coat, such as is no longer worn. It is not at all becoming; it resembles a dressing-gown, but is not one; it is dark blue or black. This garb proclaims him to be a man in orders —a priest, or something of the kind. He looks stern. He must have had chest complaint. I see that his lungs are distended with blood. He has been ailing a long time. He is very weak. I think that privations have caused this, and made his chest so delicate. I do not see, however, that he has the germs of any fatal disease, and this makes me believe that his death was violent, accidental, unexpected. His hand is large and thin. I see a medal on his breast, the size of the palm of a hand. He wears low-cut shoes, such are not worn now. He will not speak to me, so I conclude that he did not speak French."

The following remarks precede the signature of M. Dejean:—"This person had more of gentleness and kindness than severity in his disposition. He died of a malignant fever, accompanied by delirium lasting several days, and attributed by the doctor to the needs of a vigorous constitution thwarted by absolute continence."

"The details acknowledged to be accurate.

(Signed) DEJEAN DE LA BASTIE,

This 25th August, 1848. 18, Rue Neuve de Luxembourg."[1]

The introduction in the first instance of a figure which is not recognised by the sitter is a not uncommon feature at these séances. Adèle generally persisted, as in the present case, that the figure belonged to the same family; and not infrequently the sitter was ultimately induced to recognise it. In one case Cahagnet describes,[2] under the title "Quadruple Apparition," a case in which three figures appeared before one was recognised. In this case the sitter appears ultimately to have given a grudging recognition to all four. But the unprejudiced inquirer will probably not share Cahagnet's view, that the introduction of three tardily recognised figures adds strength to the evidence. Cahagnet himself was satisfied that the somnambule actually held converse with spirits, and most of his sitters seem to have shared his conviction. But there were a few who ascribed the results to thought-transference; and

[1] *Arcanes*, vol. ii. pp. 219, 220. [2] Vol. iii. pp. 101–8.

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the sitting next to be quoted certainly lends support to this view.

M. du Potet, a well-known writer on Animal Magnetism, and editor at that time of the *Journal du Magnétisme* in Paris, came to see Cahagnet's subject, and brought with him the Prince de Kourakine, who is described as Secretary to the Russian Ambassador. The Prince had asked for his sister-in-law, and a striking personal description had been given by Adèle, which was acknowledged by the Prince, in the hearing of M. du Potet and two other witnesses, to be accurate. Unfortunately, the Prince's signed attestation was not procured on the spot; he had promised to come again, but—as Cahagnet delicately put it—"les événements survenus en France l'ont forcé de partir," and the promised testimony was never obtained. After the apparition of the Russian Princess, however, the record continues:—

No. 117.[1]—M. du Potet wishes in his turn to call up M. Dubois, a doctor, a friend of his who had been dead about fifteen months.

Adèle said: "I see a grey-headed man, he has very little hair on the front of his head; his forehead is bare and prominent at the temples, making his head appear square. He may be about sixty years of age. He has two wrinkles on either side of his cheeks, a crease under his chin, making it look double; he is short-necked and stumpy; has small eyes, a thick nose, rather a large mouth, a flat chin, and small thin hands. He does not look to me quite so tall as M. du Potet; if he is not stouter he is more broad-shouldered. He wears a brown frock-coat with side-pockets. I see him draw a snuff-box out of one of them and take a pinch. He has a very funny walk, he does not carry himself well, and has weak legs; he must have suffered from them. He has rather short trousers. Ah! he does not clean his shoes every day, for they are covered with mud. Taking it all together, he is not well dressed. He has asthma, for he breathes with difficulty. I see, too, that he has a swelling in the abdomen, he has something to support it. I have told him that it is M. du Potet who asked for him. He talks to me of magnetism with incredible volubility; he talks of everything at once; he mixes everything up; I cannot understand any of it; it makes him sputter saliva."

M. du Potet asks that the apparition may be asked why he has not appeared to him before, as he had promised. He answers: "Wait till I find out my whereabouts; I have only just arrived, I am studying everything I see. I want to tell you all about it when I appear, and I shall have many things to tell you."

"Which day did you promise me you would do so?" "On a Wednesday." Adèle adds: "This man must be forgetful; I am

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 118–20.

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sure that he was very absent-minded." M. du Potet asks further: "When will you appear to me?" "I cannot fix the time; I shall try to do so in six weeks." "Ask him if he was fond of the Jesuits?" At this name he gave such a leap in the air, stretching out his arms and crying, "The Jesuits," that Adèle draws back quickly, and is so startled that she does not venture to speak to him again.

M. du Potet declares that all these details are very accurate, that he cannot alter a syllable. He says that this man's powers of conversation were inexhaustible; he mixed up all the sciences to which he was devoted, and spoke with such volubility that, as the clairvoyant says, he sputtered in consequence. He took little pains with his appearance; he was so absent-minded that he sometimes forgot to eat. When anyone mentioned the Jesuits to him he jumped as Adèle has described. He was always covered with mud like a spaniel. It is not surprising that the clairvoyant should see him with muddy shoes. He had, in fact, promised M. du Potet that he would appear to him on a Wednesday or a Saturday. M. du Potet has acknowledged the accuracy of this apparition in No. 75 of the *Journal du Magnétisme.*

In effect, in the *Journal* of August 10th of the same year, in reviewing the first volume of Cahagnet's work, du Potet gives handsome testimony to the striking nature of the impersonation, "si bien que je croyais le voir moi-même, tant le tableau en était saisissant. Bientôt cette ombre s'est enfuie en effrayant la somnambule; un seul mot avait causé cette disparition subite, et mon étonnement en fut porté à son comble, car ce même mot le mettait toujours en fureur." But du Potet, for all that, is inclined to attribute the phenomenon to transmission of thought from his own mind,[1] and a few months later,[2] in reviewing Cahagnet's second volume, he takes occasion to give the result of his further inquiries on this séance. Generally, the minute description of the personal appearance and other particulars which were prominent in du Potet's own mind at the time were correct; and other details were correctly given which du Potet might have heard, but had certainly not remembered at the time. He had ascertained, however, from the widow and children that Dr. Dubois took no tobacco; never had a *redingote* of the colour described; had no hernia, and consequently wore no bandage. Moreover, the apparition predicted never came off. Du Potet, however, adds expressly that Dr. Dubois was unknown in life to Cahagnet and his somnambule.

But, in fact, Cahagnet's own records furnish us with the most convincing refutation of his theory that these com-

[1] *Journal du Magnétisme*, vol. vii. p. 89. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii. p. 24.

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munications were authentic messages from the spirits of the dead. For there are two or three accounts which, while they point to the action of telepathy, are extremely difficult to reconcile with the theory of spirit-intercourse. On two occasions, recorded in the second volume, Adèle was asked to search for a long-lost relative of the sitter. On each occasion she found the man *alive*, and conversed with his spirit.

M. Lucas came to inquire after the fate of his brother-in-law, who had disappeared after a quarrel some twelve years previously. Adèle, in the trance, found the man at once, said that he was alive, and that she saw him in a "foreign country," where there were trees like those in America, and that he was busy gathering seeds from small shrubs about three feet high. He would not answer her questions, and she asked to be awoke, as she was afraid of wild beasts.[1] M. Lucas returned a few days afterwards, bringing with him the mother of the missing man.

No. 99.[2]—Adèle, as soon as she was asleep, said: "I see him." "Where do you see him?" "Here." "Give us a description of him again, and also of the place where he is." "He is a fair man, tanned by the heat of the sun; he is very stout, his features are fairly regular; brown eyes, large mouth; he appears gloomy and meditative. He is dressed as a workman, in a sort of short blouse. He is occupied at present, as he was last time, in gathering seed, which resembles peppercorns, but I do not think it is pepper; it is larger. This seed grows on small shrubs about one mètre high. There is a little negro with him occupied in the same way." "Try to obtain some answer to-day. Get him to tell you the name of the country where you see him." "He will not answer." "Tell him that his good mother, for whom he had a great affection, is with you, and asks for news of him." "Oh! at the mention of his mother he turned round and said to me, 'My mother! I shall not die without seeing her again. Comfort her, and tell her that I always think of her. I am not dead!'" "Why does he not write to her?" "He has written to her, but the vessel has no doubt been wrecked—at least he supposes this to be so, since he has received no answer. He tells me that he is in Mexico. He has followed the emperor, Don Pedro; he has been imprisoned for five years; he has suffered a great deal, and will use every effort to return to France; they will see him again." "Can he name the place in which he is living?" "No; it is very far inland. These countries have no names." "Is he living with a European?" "No, with a coloured man." "Why does he not write to his mother?" "Because no vessels come to the place where he is. He does not know to whom to turn. Besides, he only knew how to write a very little, and has almost forgotten.

[1] *Arcanes*, vol ii. pp. 32, 33. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii. pp. 34–37.

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There is no one with him who can render him this service; no one speaks his language; he makes himself understood with great difficulty. Besides that, he has never been of a communicative disposition or a talker. He seems to be rather a surly fellow. It is very difficult to get these few words out of him. One would think he were dumb." "In short, how can one manage to write to him or hear news of him?" "He knows nothing about it. He can only say these three things: I am in Mexico, I am not dead, they will see me again." "Why did he leave his parents in this manner, without saying anything to them, as he was happy at home?" "This man was very reserved; he hardly ever spoke. He loved his mother very much, but he had not the same affection for his father, who was a passionate, surly man, and often treated him brutally. The cup had long since been full. It was not the trifling dispute that he had had with his father the day before his departure that made him decide to go away; it had been his fixed determination for some time past. He told no one of it. He went away on the sly. Having kissed them all the evening before, he made good his escape next day, without another word. Do not be uneasy, madam; you will see him again!" This good woman burst into tears, because she recognised the truth of every detail given her by Adèle. She did not find anything at fault in the description. The disposition, the education, and the departure of her son were as Adèle said; but a greater semblance of probability is given to the clairvoyant's account by the fact that his relations had an idea that he had enlisted in Don Pedro's army, and at one time took some steps to ascertain the truth of it. M. Lucas told me of this detail on a journey which he afterwards made to Paris. No information was, however, obtainable.

Shortly after this incident M. Mirande, the head of the printing-office in which the first volume of the *Arcanes* had been printed, came to Cahagnet and asked for a sitting. He was much impressed with what he saw and heard, and finally begged Adèle to ask for the apparition of his brother, who, he believed, had died in the Russian campaign. Adèle did not see him in the spirit world, and said that he was not dead, that she saw him on earth. She then gave a description of his personal appearance, uniform, and disposition, which, with certain qualifications and corrections, appears to have tallied fairly well with M. Mirande's recollections and surmises. She also gave a plausible account, alleged to be derived from actual conversation with the absent brother, of his whereabouts, and an explanation of his long silence.[1]

We have, unfortunately, no corroboration of the truth of the statements made about these two persons. A third

[1] *Arcanes*, vol. ii. pp. 60–3.

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volume of the *Arcanes* was published a year or two later, and it is perhaps fair to assume that, if news had come that either of the missing persons was still alive, and had passed through the experiences described by Adèle, Cahagnet would not have missed the opportunity of making public such a striking testimony to his subject's clairvoyance. It follows, then, that in these two séances all that we are entitled to say is that Adèle was able to divine with, it may be admitted, considerable accuracy the ideas present in the minds of her interlocutors. It seems to have been a good example of telepathy; but we have no kind of proof that it was anything more, and from internal evidence it seems very unlikely that it was anything more. In our total ignorance of all conditions and limitations, it would, perhaps, be unreasonable to regard the implicit assumption that the spirits of the dead are ready to attend at any moment the summons of the living as in itself constituting an additional obstacle to accepting the accounts of Adèle's séances in general as evidence of spirit-intercourse. But it is quite another matter when we have to deal, as in the two cases now in question, with the spirits of men still living. How did Adèle manage to discover the whereabouts of those two persons? And, still more, how did she contrive that they should speak with her, and that at a time when one of them, at least, was wide awake and engaged in earning his living by the work of his hands? And was Adèle's power of communicating with the spirits of the living restricted to persons who had gone away to distant climes in order to escape from their relatives? If Adèle, or any other of Cahagnet's clairvoyants, really had possessed the power of conversing with the living at a distance, I cannot doubt that Cahagnet, in the course of his many years' experiments, would have been able to present us with some evidence of such a power that was not purely hypothetical. Nothing would be so easy to prove. The fact that no such evidence is forthcoming affords a strong presumption that Adèle did not possess the power, and that the conversations here detailed were purely imaginary, the authentic or plausible details which they contained being filched, it may be, telepathically from the minds of those present. The curious similarity of the two accounts also points in the same direction. Both men profess to have written home, but the letters must have miscarried. Neither can write now, because they are far from the sea, in the interior. Both have suffered much; both have been prisoners; both protest that their

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relatives will see them before they die; neither, however, is in a hurry to come back; and neither is willing to discover the name of his present place of abiding.

To suppose, as the recorder supposes, that these narratives are authentic revelations obtained from actual conversations with the spirits of men living in unnamed and—as Cahagnet explains at length — probably nameless localities in the interior of Mexico or Asiatic Russia, is to strain credulity to the breaking-point. But if these two narratives are not what they seem to be, what are we to say of the other narratives in the book, which are cast in the same dramatic form, and contain similar details harmonising with the expectations or memories of the interlocutors? If those are not authentic messages from the distant living, we require some further warrant for the assumption that these are authentic messages from the spirits of the dead. Considered in conjunction with the visions of heaven and dead playmates which characterised the earlier trances, these later utterances certainly point to an exclusively mundane origin.[1]

[1] It is fair to say that, in his third volume, Cahagnet records another case in which a missing person was found by Adèle and news of him conveyed to his anxious mother, and that in this case the details communicated—which were beyond the mother's knowledge or conjecture—were stated by her subsequently to have proved correct. There is, however, no very striking correspondence in the details which she actually quotes; and as the only account of the sitting is contained in a letter written by the mother "some months" later, and some months, also, after the unexpected receipt of the confirmatory letter from her absent son, which came a few weeks after the sitting, the record cannot be held to have much value (Vol. iii. pp. 141–9).

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CHAPTER VII

THE GERMAN SOMNAMBULES

IN Germany the history of Animal Magnetism was more complex. As already said, Spiritualist views found many disciples. But not all the German magnetisers gave themselves over to parleying with spirits. From the first there were students of the new facts at least as cautious and sober-minded as in any other European country. With such men as Gmelin, Wienholt, Fischer, Kluge, Kieser, Animal Magnetism was, just as to Deleuze himself, primarily an adjunct to the art of healing; and perhaps most of the German investigators possessed sounder knowledge of the physical sciences in general and of medicine in particular than the earlier French magnetisers could claim. But the phenomena observed were essentially the same. The experiments of M. Tardy de Montravel were repeated, confirmed, and improved upon. Light was observed to stream from the fingers of the operator, from the poles of a magnet, from the heart of a living frog, or the spinal marrow of a recently killed ox. This radiant light would impregnate a glass of water, and would be conducted, reflected, or dispersed by the intervention of various substances. Metals exercised characteristic effects on somnambules at a distance of ten or fifteen paces, inducing severally pricking, warmth, numbness, drowsiness, catalepsy, and so on; the poles of the magnet could be distinguished by the different sensations to which they gave rise. In a word, we find scattered through the writings of the first two decades of the nineteenth century the germs of those curious pseudo-observations, which Reichenbach was a little later to expand into an enormous treatise.

Again we read that to the clairvoyant somnambule her body is transparent, so that the exact condition of every organ can be seen, and the nature of any ailment described. A good clairvoyant, of course, possessed the same power of insight into the bodily processes and ailments of others, and

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could foretell the course of diseases, and prescribe the fitting remedies.

Again, in the books of this period we find much of community of sensation between operator and subject; of reading of thought; of the action of the operator's will—even at a distance of some miles—in sending the patient into trance; and finally of clairvoyance, whether at close quarters or at a considerable distance.[1] The latter faculty—though abundant illustrations of it are given—is said by Kieser[2] to be much rarer than in France. But the incident which apparently provoked the comparison—an account in the *Annales du Magnétisme Animal* of a man who on his first essay had made five women simultaneously clairvoyant in one evening—can hardly, perhaps, be taken as representative.[3]

One of the most fully recorded series of observations in thought-transference and clairvoyance is to be found in a case given at great length in the *Archiv für den thierischen Magnetismus*, by Dr. Van Ghert, Secretary of the Royal Mineralogical Society at Jena.[4] Van Ghert's patient was a young woman of twenty-eight, who appears to have been a neurotic of the same type as Frau Hauffe, and the other somnambules to be discussed later. Several instances are quoted in detail, in which the somnambule gave accurate descriptions, to persons who came from a distance, of their homes, the furniture contained in each room, the personal appearance of the inmates, their mental idiosyncrasies, and even the diseases from which they suffered, and the appropriate remedies. If we may trust Van Ghert, who seems to have been a careful observer and without strong bias towards the marvellous, the descriptions coincided so closely with the

[1] Kluge, *Versuch einer Darstellung des animalischen Magnetismus*, etc. (Berlin, 1815), gives a useful summary of the observations and views of his predecessors on all these points.

[2] *Archiv für den thierischen Magnetismus*, vol i. part iii. pp. 126, 127.

[3] The numerous observations which are cited to prove the existence of a faculty of vision, either in the pit of the stomach or some other portion of the body, are as inconclusive as those quoted by the French Animal Magnetists. In most of the cases, indeed, no precautions, or wholly inadequate precautions, seem to have been taken to exclude normal vision through the half-closed eyes, and in the rare instances where vision at the time was apparently impossible, as when the word to be read was wrapped up in vellum paper and sealed before the sitting, there is still open the possibility that the subject might have surreptitiously obtained knowledge of the text beforehand, or that she might have been influenced by transmission of thought from the hypnotist and those around who knew the word. (*Archiv*, vol. iv. part iii. pp. 80–2. See also vol. iii. part ii. p. 131; part iii. pp. 14 and 18; v. part iii. p. 14; vi. part ii. pp. 103, 124, and elsewhere, and the numerous references given in Kluge's book already quoted.)

[4] *Archiv*, vol. ii. part i. pp. 3–186; part ii. pp. 3–51. The account given in the *Archiv* is translated from the original Dutch.

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facts that something more than chance must have been at work. But the evidence, since it rests on Van Ghert's testimony alone, and we have no means of knowing how the conversations were reported, or what hints may have been given by the witnesses, is no better, perhaps not so good, as in some of the cases quoted in a later chapter from English observers.

A large selection of instances of apparent thought-transference and clairvoyance, cited for the most part from contemporary publications, will be found in another work of this date, *Der Magnetismus und die allgemeine Weltsprache*, by H. M. Wesermann, Government Assessor and Chief Inspector of Roads at Dusseldorf.[1] The most valuable part of Wesermann's book is a brief record of some experiments of his own in thought-transference at a distance. On four occasions he reports that he succeeded in inducing four separate acquaintances to dream on matters suggested by himself. On the fifth trial he caused the subject of the experiment, and a friend who happened to be in his company at the time, to see a waking vision of a woman's figure.[2] The experiments are of interest as anticipating very closely some experiments on the same lines recorded in recent years in the publications of the Society for Psychical Research.

The writers so far quoted, even when treating of clairvoyance and similar marvellous powers, expressly repudiated a Spiritualist or mystical interpretation of the phenomena, and regarded Animal Magnetism as a branch of physical science. Thus Wesermann supposed that his power of influencing the thoughts of a distant acquaintance depended upon the projection from himself of a stream of magnetic fluid, visible to the clairvoyant eye as a stream of light. Van Ghert's patient never professed to commune with angels. Kluge[3] contends that the pious Jung, in claiming that the denizens of the spiritual world are perceptible to our senses, overshoots the mark, and falls back into sheer materialism. Ghost-seeing, in Kluge's view, whether induced or spontaneous, is pure illusion. So Kieser, in reviewing in the *Archiv*[4] Meier's history of Auguste Müller, to be discussed later, takes occasion to controvert Meier's explanation of the apparition of his somnambule to a friend at a distance.

[1] Creveld, 1822.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 26–30. The experiments are quoted in *Phantasms of the Living*, vol. i. pp. 101, 102. The fifth and most important experiment is given in full in the *Journal S. P. R.* for March, 1890; and again in my own *Apparitions and Thought-Transference*, p. 231.

[3] *Versuch einer Darstellung*, pp. 300, 301. [4] Vol. iii. part iii. p. 119.

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Meier claimed the incident as a proof that the soul of the ecstatic can leave the body and make itself perceptible to human senses. Kieser sees in it merely proof of an action upon the mind of the seer exercised by the mind of the ecstatic. For the soul, says he, being immaterial, cannot make itself visible except through its proper body. But, while rejecting the crudely Spiritualistic view, Wienholt, Kieser, and Kluge—to mention no others—are agreed that in the higher stages of the trance the soul approaches the threshold of the universal life, and seems partly to free itself from the shackles of space and time.[1] Whilst Nasse goes further, and frankly claims that in somnambulism we have to deal with a fact of the spiritual order; and that any attempt to correlate its laws with those of the physical universe must end in failure.[2] It is clear, indeed, that men who believed in the reality of clairvoyance at a distance (as distinguished from reading the thoughts of those present) must have been hard put to it to find an explanation in physical terms.

But side by side with these sober-minded investigators there were many who saw in the phenomena of the trance proofs of intercourse with a spiritual world, and recorded the utterances of the somnambules as precious revelations from superhuman sources. The founder of this school may be said to be J. H. Jung, better known as Jung-Stilling; not, indeed, that Jung could or did claim to be the originator of the scheme of spiritual cosmology which he propounded. Much of it could certainly be found in Swedenborg; much of it, again, is the common property of the mystics of all ages. And no small part of his teaching was simply a re-statement in modern terms of certain Christian beliefs. But Jung's special distinction is that he placed the doctrine of the psychic body on a new and surer basis, first by associating it with the conception—then for the first time beginning to gain general acceptance in the scientific world—of the luminiferous ether; and secondly, by supporting and explaining it by means of illustrations drawn from the observed phenomena of somnambulism. Jung, who was born in 1740, began life in humble circumstances. In early manhood, however, he obtained a medical degree, and practised for many years as a doctor, ultimately becoming Professor of Political Economy at the Universities of Marburg and Heidelberg. His book, *Theorie*

[1] Wienholt, *Lectures in Somnambulism* (? 1804). I know this work only in an English translation. Kieser, "*System des Tellurismus oder thierischen Magnétismus.*" Kluge, *op. cit.*, pp. 259–306.

[2] *Archiv für den thierischen Magnetismus*, vol. i. part iii. pp. 3–22.

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der Geister-Kunde, appears to have been published in the last years of his life. It is hardly, even in form, a scientific treatise, being avowedly a piece of Christian apologetics. About three-fourths of the book consist of a collection of ghost stories, anecdotes of prophecy, and second sight, recorded without any attempt at verification or critical treatment.[1]

Jung gives a convenient summary of his theory, in the shape of fifty-five propositions, from which I quote the following:—

9. Animal Magnetism undeniably proves that we have an inward man, a soul, which is constituted of the divine spark, the immortal spirit possessing reason and will, and of a luminous body (*Lichthülle*), which is inseparable from it.

10. Light, electric, magnetic, galvanic matter, and ether appear to be all one and the same body under different modifications. This light-substance or ether is the element which connects body and soul, and the spiritual (*Sinnenwelt*) and material world together.

11. When the inward man, the human soul, forsakes the inward sphere, where the senses operate (*die innere Merkstätte der Sinner verlässt*) and merely continues the vital functions, the body falls into an entranced state, or a profound sleep, during which the soul acts more freely, powerfully, and actively. All its faculties are elevated.

12. The more the soul is divested of the body, the more extensive, free, and powerful is its inward sphere of operation. It has, therefore, no need whatever of the body in order to live and exist. The latter is rather an hindrance to it. . . .

13. The whole of these propositions are sure and certain inferences, which I have drawn from experiments in Animal Magnetism. These most important experiments undeniably show that the soul does not require the organs of sense in order to be able to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel in a much more perfect state. . . .

30. The boundless ether that fills the space of our solar system is the element of spirits in which they live and move. The atmosphere

[1] The value of this evidence may be estimated from a single example. Jung is anxious to prove his contention that the soul of a man can leave the body while the man is still alive, and show itself in a distant place. The narrative which he selects for this purpose was told him by a friend (unnamed) on whose veracity he could rely; the friend heard it from a respectable (*redliche*) individual (unnamed); the source of this respectable individual's information is not mentioned; but he was not, apparently, personally concerned in the episode, and it cannot be inferred from Jung's account that he was even acquainted with the chief actors (unnamed). The only date mentioned in connection with the case is "about 60 or 70 years ago," and this does not relate to the date of the incident itself, which had taken place an indefinite number of years previously. I do not quote the story in full, since, perhaps because of the length of its pedigree, perhaps because of the soundness of the narrator's theological views, it forms a prominent item in nearly every collection of ghost stories since published (*Th. der Geister Kunde*, new edition, p. 60. Stuttgart, 1827).

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(*Dunstkreis*) that surrounds our earth, down to its centre, and particularly the night, is the abode of fallen angels, and of such human souls as die in an unconverted state.[1]

It remains to add that Jung taught that the trance was a diseased condition; and that the attempt to communicate with spirits or foretell the future by such means was highly dangerous and sinful (Propositions 23, 24); and warns his readers against yielding implicit trust to the somnambule's utterances. But Jung's successors paid little heed to these warnings, and in the course of the next thirty years there were recorded at prodigious length the sayings and doings of many "highly remarkable somnambules." One of the first of these to attract attention—an attention which the nature of her performances scarcely seems to have merited—was a certain Fraülein Auguste Müller, of Carlsruhe, whose history, as preserved by Dr. Meier, may be taken as fairly representative.[2] The young woman in the trance was able to diagnose and prescribe for the ailments of herself and other persons in the usual fashion. She said in the trance that she could discern not only the bodies of men, but also their thoughts and characters; but no proofs are offered of this power. She claimed to converse with the spirit of her dead mother. She also said that she could visit her brother in Vienna, and make her presence known to him; but she rejected Dr. Meier's suggestion that she should speak aloud, for fear that she should frighten him. It is recorded that with her eyes closed she could read theatre tickets and songs out of a music-book. But no details are given. The nearest approach to a test is as follows: Meier asked her one evening whether she could tell him anything noteworthy which had recently happened in his own family, and the clairvoyant in reply was able to tell him of the death of his father-in-law at a town fifteen miles off. Meier had received the news of this event on the morning of that day, but was confident—a confidence which he does not enable us to share—that the somnambule knew nothing about it. One other case may be cited. A friend of Auguste, one Catharine, happened to be suffering from toothache, and told the somnambule that she would probably be unable to pay her usual visit on the following day. Auguste replied, "I will visit you, then, to-night." That night Catharine is reported to have seen Auguste enter her room clothed

[1] From the translation by Samuel Jackson, *Theory of Pneumatology*. London, 1834.

[2] *Höchst merkwürdige Geschichte der magnetisch hellsehenden Auguste Müller*. Stuttgart, 1818.

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in a night-dress. The form, which hovered above the floor, came up to Catharine and lay beside her in bed. In the morning Catharine awoke to find her toothache gone, and was much astonished to learn that Auguste had never left her own bed all the night through. The incident is regarded by Meier as a manifest proof of the existence of a psychic body. Kieser, as already mentioned, reviewing the case in the *Archiv*, adduces it as a striking instance of action at a distance, conditioned by the *rapport* between the young women. The reader may possibly prefer a still simpler hypothesis.

In another case, which is recorded by Dr. C. Römer, we advance a little further into the realms of the unknown.[1]

The somnambule in this case was Römer's own daughter, a girl of fifteen, who in November, 1813, was seized with convulsive attacks, followed by catalepsy. Ultimately she became somnambulic, prescribed for her own ailments and those of her father and other persons, rejecting all other medical treatment than her own. Römer frequently asserts that she displayed in the trance knowledge which she could not possibly have acquired from normal sources. But he offers little evidence for the statement; and most of the utterances which he records were from their nature incapable of verification. One curious feature of this trance—a feature which we shall see developed to a much greater extent in a later somnambule—was the tendency to arithmetical symbolism. Römer reproduces a whole page of numerical calculations, the meaning of which is left obscure, but which seem to have profoundly impressed the onlookers as having presumably some mystic significance.[2] In another direction Fraülein Römer advanced beyond Auguste Müller. Like her, she conversed freely with her dead relations. But, further, she was conducted, sometimes by a deceased relative, but more frequently by the spirit of a still living companion, one Louise, to the moon. But, alas! her description of her first voyage reveals a conception of the solar system scarcely more adequate than that of the Blessed Damosel, watching, "from the gold bar of Heaven,"

> ". . . the tides of day and night
> With flame and darkness ridge
> The void, to where this Earth
> Spins like a fretful midge."

[1] *Ausfuhrliche historische Darstellung einer höchst merkwürdigen Somnambüle*, etc., etc. von C. Römer, PH.D., etc. Stuttgart, 1821.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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It was night when she left the earth—5.30 on a January afternoon—and continued night, apparently, as she voyaged to the moon, for she describes how that luminary, at one point, showed forty times larger, but there is no mention of the sun. However, she enjoyed a unique astronomical experience. She watched the sun rise over the lunar mountains, basked in his rays for a whole lunar day, witnessed his setting, and returned to the earth in time for supper. Miss Römer was probably not aware that in the ordinary course of nature about a fortnight would elapse between the rising and the setting of the sun on our satellite.

After this, no description of birds, flowers, waterfalls, mountains, lovely valleys, and even the inhabitants of the moon, can seem anything but tame. In truth, her account of lunar scenery bears some resemblance to a pre-Raphaelite painter's conception of the plains of heaven. At her first visit to the moon she learns that her two little sisters had already gone to "Juno": the spirits of the dead apparently come first to the moon, and then progress to higher spheres.[1] The knowledge of this fact lends a painful interest to Miss Römer's first interview with her deceased grandparents, whom she meets in the moon, and, with the terrible candour of the clairvoyant, asks why they have not already gone higher. Satisfactory explanations are given; and, indeed, the somnambule allows that her relatives shine more than they did upon the earth.[2]

It would be scarcely profitable to carry our study of these revelations further. It should be noted, however, that Römer apparently accepts them, if not as indubitably authentic, at least as having serious claims upon our consideration. He records them with scrupulous care and at great length, and he mentions that the descriptions of the inhabitants of other worlds given by his daughter accord precisely with the descriptions given by Ennemoser's subject and by another more recent clairvoyant.[3]

Justinus Kerner, a well-known poet of that generation and a physician of some distinction, had his attention early called to the trance and its value in therapeutics. In 1826 he published the history of two "remarkable" somnambules, whom he had treated magnetically. Towards the end of the same year there came to him at Weinsberg, to be treated by him, one Frau Frederica Hauffe, better known from her birthplace as the "Seeress of Prevorst." A full history of her

[1] Page 54. [2] Page 85. [3] Page 213, note.

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remarkable trances was published by Kerner in 1829, shortly after the death of the Seeress.[1]

From her childhood she had been delicate; had suffered from convulsive attacks, had fallen into spontaneous trance, and seen visions. She had already been magnetised, with more or less success, by different persons on several occasions. When she came to Weinsberg, Kerner, by his own account, was somewhat incredulous, and disposed to treat her by ordinary medicine rather than by magnetism. After a few weeks, however, finding drugs of no use, he magnetised her, and thereafter followed implicitly the treatment prescribed by her in the trance. From that time, until her death in August, 1829, she appears to have spent the greater part of her existence in somnambulism—the trance, or secondary condition, lasting on one occasion for about a year.

The phenomena claimed to be observed in her case were such as we are already familiar with. She reacted in various ways to the presence or contact of stones, metals, plants, and drugs. She would become cataleptic if left seated on a sandstone bench; glass or crystal, on the other hand, awakened her from the magnetic state. She wielded the divining rod with great success. She could distinguish magnetised water by its appearance, and could even tell how many passes had been made over it. Further, in the magnetic state the lower part of her body would involuntarily rise out of the water in her bath—a procedure which reminded Kerner of the mediæval test for witches. She could see the internal mechanism of the human body, and could trace and accurately describe all the ramifications of the nervous system. In the case of persons who had lost a limb she could see the psychic form of the limb still attached to the body.

But signs and wonders of this kind, which are more or less common to all somnambules of the period, need not detain us further. The Seeress is conspicuous, above all her fellows in the history of somnambulism in Germany, for three things: the numerous proofs which she purported to afford of abnormal powers of vision, whether of the distant or of the future, and of seeing and conversing with ghosts; the physical disturbances which were observed in her presence; and her extraordinary revelations on things spiritual.

[1] *Die Seherin von Prevorst, Eroffnungen uber das innere Leben aes Menschen und uber das Hereinragen einer Geisterwelt in die Unsere.* Stuttgart und Tübingen. A second edition, to which reference is made in this account, was published in 1832, and two others, in 1838 and 1846 respectively. An English translation, greatly abridged, by Mrs. Crowe, was published in London in 1845.

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As regards the first, Kerner gives several instances of clairvoyant and prophetic dreams and visions; but though he shows a better notion of evidence than many of his contemporaries, none of the records are of much account. Dates and other essential details are frequently lacking, and in the only cases which appear to be definite and conclusive we are dependent, so far as can be gathered from Kerner's narrative, on members of the Seeress' family for all particulars of the alleged fulfilment.

But the Seeress' supernormal faculties found their chief field of activity in seeing and holding conversations with phantasmal figures, the spirits of deceased men and women, who came to her mostly for help, guidance, and prayer. In this manner she held communication, on occasion, with the spirits of deceased citizens of Weinsberg, and received from them much information on their affairs and family history.

Thus, a certain poor family in Weinsberg were disturbed by a ghost. This came to Kerner's knowledge, and he brought the woman of the house to see Frau Hauffe. Thereafter the ghost seems to have attached itself to the Seeress. He—the ghost—told her that he had lived in the house where he had first appeared, and that he had in his lifetime defrauded two orphans; later he said that he had lived about 1700; that he had died at the age of seventy-nine; and later still, that his name was Belon. Search in the town records showed that there had been a burgomaster of that name, who had actually lived in the house named; he had died in 1740, aged seventy-nine, and had been a guardian of orphans.[1]

On another occasion the Seeress was much disturbed by noises from an unquiet ghost, who ultimately revealed himself as the spirit of a bankrupt solicitor, recently deceased, who had owed much money in the town. In connection with the communication the Seeress was enabled, as a test, to describe the whereabouts of a certain document, which was ultimately discovered in the position described by her in the office of the High Bailiff.[2] The incident is narrated at considerable length by Kerner, who regards it as a striking proof of spirit-identity. It does not appear, however, that either in this case or in that of the Burgomaster Belon any information was actually furnished by Madame Hauffe which could not have been obtained from local gossip, or at most by carefully conducted inquiries.

These ghostly figures which purported constantly to appear to the Seeress herself, both by night and by day, were

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 136-71. [2] Vol. ii. pp. 93-110.

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occasionally visible to others. Thus Kerner himself on one occasion saw a cloudy figure:—

"On the 8th December, at seven in the evening, I happened to be in Frau H.'s outer room, from which one could see into her bedroom. I saw there a cloudlike figure (a grey pillar of cloud as though with a head), without any definite outlines. I seized a light and hurried silently into the room with it. There I found her staring fixedly at the spot where I had seen the cloudy form. It had disappeared, however, from my view."[1]

Kerner states that this is the only occasion on which he himself saw a ghost; but elsewhere he tells us that one evening, when they were sitting in a lighted room at the supper-table, a form like a white cloud floated past the window. This form was seen by all.[2] There were women servants and other persons who slept in the same room as the Seeress, or in one adjoining, who at various times professed to have seen figures similar to those seen by Frau Hauffe.

More noteworthy, however, than these apparitions—seen for the most part by servants and peasant women, whose nervous equilibrium had, no doubt, been already upset by hearing of Frau Hauffe's marvellous powers—were the noises and physical phenomena which took place generally whilst the Seeress was staying in Kerner's house. Kerner himself and his wife on several occasions heard knocks on the walls and windows of the bedroom, and other sounds, when they retired for the night.[3] All the household on one occasion heard somebody trying to force the house door.[4] Frau Hauffe's sister heard the noise of chains at the window.[5] These noises, especially the knocks and raps (*Klöpfeln und Klatschen*), were so puzzling that Frau Kerner on one occasion spent part of the night in Frau Hauffe's room in order, if possible, to ascertain their origin. The raps began about 10 p.m., proceeding apparently from the bedstead, the table, and the walls. Kerner tells us that his wife satisfied herself that they were not caused by either the Seeress or her sister, who was present in the room.[6]

The physical phenomena mostly occurred when the Seeress was alone or accompanied only by her sister. Thus gravel was on several occasions thrown in at the open window. Kerner himself did not see the gravel thrown, but he saw it lying on the floor, and found that it resembled the gravel

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. 257; see also page 33.
[2] Vol. ii. p. 168.
[3] Vol. i. p. 133; ii. p. 155, 166, 229, etc.
[4] Vol. ii. p. 183.
[5] Vol. ii. p. 168.
[6] Vol. ii. p. 141.

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in the garden just outside the house. One evening some of this gravel was thrown at the maid when she was standing near the house.[1] Again, a stool was thrown across the room,[2] and a knitting-needle flew through the air and settled in a glass of water;[3] but both these phenomena had the Seeress herself for their only witness.

There were cases, however, in which other inmates of the house were privileged to witness the physical phenomena, or at least to be present in the room when things were moved. The following is a brief summary of the evidence given by Kerner under this head.

On one occasion, the Seeress having announced that a ghost would visit her on a certain night, a trustworthy person was deputed by Kerner to share the bed of Frau Hauffe's sister, who slept in the same room as Frau Hauffe, and watch for the coming of the ghost. The trustworthy person fell asleep at 11 p.m., and was wakened at midnight by the sister getting out of bed to give Frau Hauffe her supper. Hardly had the sister got back into bed, when strange and alarming noises were heard all about the room. Presently the Seeress, who meanwhile lay quite still, began to talk to the ghost, and at last said, "Open it yourself." Then the trustworthy person beheld, "with awe such as she had never felt before," a music-book which lay on the bed gradually open itself as though by an unseen hand, the while Frau Hauffe remained still motionless.[4] On another occasion, when Kerner himself was present in the room with the sister, small pieces of cinder were thrown, not this time through the window, but from a corner of the room. Kerner could discover no natural cause for the phenomenon. He gives no details, however, and does not mention whether the Seeress was herself present, but leaves us to infer that she was.[5] An account of two other physical phenomena witnessed by Kerner or a member of his family may be quoted in full.

"An hour later, as Frau H. lay dressed on her bed in her boots, which were fastened firmly on her feet with clasps, she saw this ghost again go clanking through the room as though wearing spurs. Then she turned round at once without looking at him closely (besides it was in the dusk), lay on her other side and fell asleep, as it seemed to her. At that moment I [Kerner] entered the room, where her sister also was. Frau H. lay quite still as I looked at her, but her boots at this moment parted violently from her feet, which remained motionless, as though pulled off by an invisible hand, sped

[1] Vol. ii. p. 165-7. [2] Vol. ii. p. 166. [3] Vol. ii. p. 214.
[4] Vol. ii. p. 143. [5] Vol. ii. p. 169.

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through the air towards the sister, who was just looking out of the window, and turned round at that moment and laid themselves quietly on the ground close beside her."[1]

Three days later another remarkable phenomenon is thus recorded:—

"Whilst Frau H., her sister, and my daughter were alone in the room (Frau H. was lying in bed), suddenly the lamp shade, which stood on the table at a distance from everyone, flew to the other side of the room, as though thrown by an invisible hand. A moment before this happened Frau H. had seen the ghost with the spurs come in at the door, but she immediately became cataleptic *(fiel in Erstarrung)* and did not see what happened to the lamp shade."[2]

The only other physical disturbances recorded by Kerner for which there is any independent evidence are as follows: Kerner and his wife, at midnight (and therefore presumably in the dark), heard a noise in their room, and found that a table which stood by the bed had been thrown into the middle of the room: the Seeress was at the time staying in the house.[3] A trustworthy person, who shared the sister's bed one night, saw the nightlight extinguished without visible cause, and thereafter saw the candlestick glowing of itself.[4] A maid-servant and another person, hearing a great noise in the room where Frau Hauffe lay alone in bed, entered the room, when a stool was flung at them as by an invisible hand from another quarter of the room from that in which the Seeress lay asleep.[5]

The attentive reader will not fail to observe that none of the evidence for these marvels, except Kerner's own, is at first hand, and that the presence of Frau Hauffe's sister was apparently indispensable to the production of physical phenomena before witnesses. Indeed, this dependence on the support of her family forms, as has been already noted in the case of the alleged instances of clairvoyance and prophecy, a marked feature in Frau Hauffe's manifestations of supernormal power.

It will be convenient if we consider the case of the Seeress of Prevorst, both in its evidential aspects and as regards the mystical teachings of the ecstatic, side by side with another case of the kind, recorded a few years later by Heinrich Werner, Doctor of Philosophy.[6] It is fair to assume, es-

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 211–2. [2] Vol. ii. p. 212. [3] Vol. ii. p. 222.
[4] Vol. ii. p. 213. [5] Vol. ii. p. 215.
[6] *Die Schutzgeister, oder merkwürdige Blicke zweier Seherinnen in die Geisterwelt*, etc., etc. Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1839.

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pecially as the later book was also published at Stuttgart, that Werner's somnambules as well as himself were probably acquainted with the doings and teachings of the Seeress of Prevorst. There is indeed a striking similarity in both respects between the two books. "R. D.," Werner's leading clairvoyant, was a girl of eighteen, of whose medical history and manifold ailments he gives a minute account. Werner is careful to explain that, so far was he from attempting to induce a state of magnetic clairvoyance, both he and his patient were much surprised when she spontaneously fell into that state.[1] However, the trance once established appears to have recurred, or was re-induced, at almost daily intervals.

The physical phenomena attending R. D. were not so numerous or striking as those just considered. Here are two instances: The clairvoyant had just been engaged in conversation with a wicked monk, of most terrible appearance, and a Jesuit to boot, who by his own confession had murdered his five children and buried them one by one in a cloister. Even Albert, R.'s guardian spirit, could not always keep this fearsome being at a distance. Except for this spiritual companion, Werner was alone with the clairvoyant. He heard, as if proceeding from a small table near him, a clatter (*Klirren*) like a cup rattling in a saucer, but could find nothing to account for the sound. Presently it occurred again, but louder, and was repeated several times. Werner was completely puzzled. R. D. explained that the wicked monk had made the noise, and was much delighted with the effect produced.[2]

In the other case the spirit was more ambitious. Werner returned at noon one day to his lodgings, which consisted of five rooms, leading into one another, the suite terminating at either end—an arrangement common in Germany—in a door giving on to the staircase; these doors stood opposite to each other. The one on the left was fastened on the day in question. Werner entered by that on the right. On his entrance Werner, "together with the lady whom he found"[3] in one of the rooms (no further account of this lady is given), heard the sound of a heavy fall in the front room, to which the door on the left gave immediate entrance. They both rushed through the suite of connecting rooms, and found that in this front room two flower-pots, which had stood on the ledge of the middle window, had been violently flung to the floor and broken in pieces, the sherds, earth, and plants being scattered right across the room. Moreover, one of the curtains

[1] Introduction, pp. xii., xiii. [2] Pages 188, 189.
[3] *die Dame* possibly means the landlady of the lodgings.

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of the middle window had been twisted round a birdcage which hung from the ceiling. The window was open, but the jalousies were closed; the day intensely hot, and no wind stirring; and there was not even a cat in the room. From his house Werner went into Stuttgart in the afternoon, and returned, at six p.m., straight to the bedside of his patient, without telling anyone of the, to him inexplicable, incidents of the morning. Nevertheless, the clairvoyant showed herself acquainted with the whole affair, and was even able to furnish the explanation, to wit, that the aforesaid wicked monk had thrown about the flower-pots after a desperate struggle with the angel-pure Albert, who tried to thrust him out of the house.[1]

Of the occasional instances of terrestrial clairvoyance the following is the case which Werner himself regards as the most striking. The clairvoyant had just been prescribing eau-de-cologne for the headaches from which Frau Werner was suffering, when she suddenly broke off, anxious and trembling, and cried—

"'For God's sake! oh, Albert, help, save! My Emilie is falling out on to the street; oh, hasten, and save—(a short, anxious pause) —God be thanked, help has already come! My faithful Guide and Friend, thou hast prepared help, before I knew of the danger, or could ask for it.' 'What has shaken and disturbed you so?' 'Oh, my little sister at U.' (Her whole body trembled violently). 'What is wrong with her?' 'She was in the upper story of the house just when they were drawing up wood from the street with a windlass. She wanted to catch the rope with the weight dangling at it, and as there is no parapet up there, the swaying would have dragged her out, if my father had not caught hold of her at that moment and pulled her in.'"

A few days later, in response to an inquiry from Werner as to whether anything remarkable had happened on the day of the trance, a letter (of which the date and signature are not given) was received, confirming all these facts, and stating that the father had been disturbed in his office, at some distance from the house, by an inexplicable feeling of disquiet, which had finally led him to his house, and then to the upper room, just in the nick of time to save his child.

Albert, it is hardly necessary to say, took the whole credit of the performance; and it was, indeed, his intervention on this occasion which finally convinced Werner of that admirable spirit's independent existence.[2]

[1] Pages 190–2.

[2] Pages 89–91. See also p. 451. For other instances of alleged clairvoyance, see pp. 70, 73, 99, 123, 125, etc.

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Finally, let us briefly consider the doctrinal utterances of the somnambules, and the inferences founded on those utterances as to the constitution of man and the nature of the spirit world.

The central point of these teachings is that man consists of body, soul, and spirit, the two latter surviving death and forming the spiritual man. But the soul itself is clothed, for the time at least, after leaving the body by an ethereal body (*Nervengeist*) which partakes rather of the nature of body than of soul, and ultimately with progressive spirits, according to some somnambules, decays and leaves the soul free. It is apparently this *Nervengeist* which carries on the vital processes when the soul leaves the body in the magnetic trance, and which after death withdraws with the soul and leaves the body to perish. It is the *Nervengeist* which attracts to itself grosser particles and becomes visible even to the fleshly eye in the case of low and undeveloped spirits.

The conception implicitly held by all mystical writers at this time of the relation between body, *Nervengeist*, soul, and spirit is apparently that they differed from each other only as in the gradation of coarser and more attenuated substances. Indeed, Werner expresses this conception in so many words. There is, he says, but one absolutely immaterial Being—that is God. Below God there is an infinite chain from seraph to grain of sand, from highest self-consciousness to most absolute unconsciousness, each link in the chain having more of earth intermixed with its spiritual nature than that which went before. The soul of man occupies some intermediate position in this universal procession. Would it not, he asks, be a piece of extreme folly and self-conceit to suppose that the spiritual part of man, as soon as it was separated from the body, could be as absolutely immaterial as God Himself?[1]

But apart from this general scheme of man's constitution, which was more or less common to all the mystics of the time, and has been adopted and generously amplified by Spiritualists and Theosophists since, the Seeress of Prevorst is responsible for other revelations of a very curious kind. She described, with the utmost minuteness, certain systems of circles—designated respectively Sun-Circles and Life-Circles—which had relation apparently to spiritual conditions and the passage of time. Kerner gives most amazing diagrams of these circles. The grand sun-circle has two concentric inner circles and innumerable radii, and the inner-

[1] Page 432.

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most concentric circle is itself ornamented with twelve subsidiary systems of triple concentric circles, having their centres at equidistant points on the circumference of the primary circle (itself the innermost circle of a larger system). Then the Seeress had a life-circle of her own, and seven private sun-circles of a somewhat less intricate nature, with an intercalary circle in the seventh. All these circles are ornamented, in addition to the radii, with eccentric straight lines like the spokes of some bicycles; and the interpretation of all this bewildering maze of lines—

> "With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,
> Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb"—

is furnished partly by cyphers, partly by words of the primitive universal language written in the primitive ideographs. With the somnambule's dissertations on the meaning of these interlacing circles and the mystic relation of the numbers attached to human life, all of which Kerner records with the most amazing patience, we need not here concern ourselves further. Görres, Eschenmayer, and other members of the circle of mystics, which continued for some years to expand and illustrate the revelations of the Seeress,[1] found in this part of her teaching analogies with the philosophical ideas of Pythagoras, of Plato, and of more recent mystics. But they do not seem to have exercised much effect on the utterances of later somnambules. The conception of a primitive universal language, however, deserves some further consideration. The characters of this language, as preserved for us in Kerner's plates, bear to the uninstructed eye some resemblance to Hebrew; but they are in many instances quite as complicated as an Egyptian hieroglyph. It was to Hebrew, however, that the Seeress herself, following the example of Dr. Dee's familiars, compared the language; it was, according to her, the primitive universal tongue and resembled the language actually spoken in the time of Jacob. She frequently spoke the tongue in the trance, maintaining that it was the common language of the inner life. Kerner asserts that she was quite consistent in her use of the words of this primitive tongue, and that those who heard her often gained by degrees some familiarity with its meaning. A few words are quoted and their likeness to Hebrew pointed out. Werner's somnambule, R. D., also made use of this language, and confirmed Frau Hauffe's account of it; and Werner

[1] In the *Blätter aus Prevorst*, of which several volumes were published from 1831 onwards.

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himself gives us a dissertation upon it which recalls faint echoes of the age-long contention of the Schoolmen on the relation of words to things.[1]

With primitive man, as yet not wholly estranged from God by sin, thought, according to Werner, answered exactly to the realities of the external world, and speech was the organic correlate of thought. This was because man shared the nature of God, with whom thought, its object and its expression are all one. The name of a thing in that primitive Nature-speech was not, as now, a mere label, fortuitous and inadequate; it expressed by some one symbol—which was, indeed, not a symbol, but rather a reflection—the form, properties, value, and existence of the thing named. With the coming of sin, the primitive Nature-speech was lost and forgotten; traces of it remain in Hebrew, and in the babbling of children; but the nations of the earth have now to be content with innumerable collocations of accidental vocables, which with ever-growing elaboration and refinement yet continually fail to be an adequate mirror of even the external aspect of this complex world. But the compendious and all-sufficient vocabulary of the world's childhood is yet preserved in the inner spirit of man: and in rare states of exaltation he can recover something of what he has lost. The priestess who chanted the Greek oracles expressed herself in that forgotten tongue, and from pure somnambules in the highest stage of ecstasy we can catch its apocalyptic accents.

Werner, had he known it, might have found further support for his argument in the curious outbreak of speaking with unknown tongues in Edward Irving's church in London, which had taken place in the interval between the publication of Kerner's book and his own, and in the account of the primæval language given by Dr. Dee.[2]

It is by the German Magnetists of the first half of the nineteenth century, whose works we have just been considering, that the foundations of the movement of Modern Spiritualism were laid. It is not merely that we find here in miniature all the characteristics of the later belief; it would be easy to demonstrate that it was through the writings of Jung-Stilling, Kerner, and their contemporaries that a path was prepared in this country, and probably also in America, for the coming of the new gospel. It was from this source, after Swedenborg,

[1] Pages 353-61.

[2] Chapter i. above. See also the account given by Flournoy (*Des Indes à la planète Mars*) of the Martian language constructed by his clairvoyant. Flournoy's results are quoted below, Book IV. chap. vii.

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that the Howitts, Shorter, Mrs. De Morgan, and others of the early English Spiritualists derived most of their philosophy; and it was largely owing to the intermixture of physical phenomena with the revelations of the Seeress of Prevorst that the grosser manifestations of the same kind found afterwards so ready a reception.

Again, all the chief problems of Spiritualism are posed in the records of this time; on the one hand, we find in the observations of men like Wesermann and Van Ghert characteristic examples of apparent thought-transference and clairvoyance; on the other, we find in Frau Hauffe and her kind indications of systematic trickery, often of a puerile character, whose only object appears to have been the satisfaction of a diseased vanity, conjoined with trances and ecstasies apparently genuine, and outpourings, also probably not less genuine, of religious feeling.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGLISH MESMERISTS

AS we have already seen, the phenomena of Animal Magnetism attracted little attention in this country, alone of European nations, for the first twenty-five years, at any rate, of the last century. Not, indeed, but that some echoes of the marvellous doings of Mesmer and his disciples had reached England. One Dr. Bell, Professor of Animal Magnetism and member of the Philosophical Harmonic Society of Paris, founded in 1782, had, in 1785, after attending a course of lectures by Bergasse and Duval Despremenil and passing a sufficient examination, received from that society under the hands of its president and council a certificate setting forth his competence to teach and practise the science. Equipped thus "by patent from the first noblemen in France," he returned to his native land, and proceeded to give lectures and practical demonstrations in many of the chief towns of the United Kingdom. His book,[1] dedicated to the pupils of his different classes, contains a fair exposition of Mesmer's teachings, such as we have already found in the writings of the earliest French Magnetists. Beginning with a dissertation on general ideas of motion, it proceeds to a consideration of magnetism at large, and as affecting the human body in particular. He gives a full description of the large oaken tub, eight feet across, which he himself used as a *baquet*, and incidentally mentions various points of difference between this apparatus and that used by "our society in Paris." In his treatment he is careful to begin by placing the patient with his back to the north; and he makes liberal use of artificial magnets and of magnetised water. Further, he gives instructions for magnetising, not the sick only, but a shilling, or a guinea, rivers, rooms, trees, and

[1] *The General and Particular Principles of Animal Electricity and Magnetism*, etc., by Monsieur le Docteur Bell, 1792. Entered in Stationers' Hall.

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other inanimate objects, referring in this connection to the results which he had witnessed "at the late Marquisses de Puységur's and Tissard's seats." It is interesting to note that he claims to have observed somnambulism as early as 1784; and that amongst the phenomena of the trance he describes how some of his patients can see in the dark, can tell what is going on in another room, and can diagnose and prescribe for their own diseases and those of others. There is one curious touch, which marks off Dr. Bell from generous enthusiasts, such as were Puységur and many of the early French Magnetisers. He recommends his disciples to have as little to do as possible with scrofula, cutaneous eruptions, and consumption; such diseases were very dangerous to treat. In the first two cases the magnetiser may contract the disease, in the last he may impart too much of his own vital force to the sufferer.

Bell was followed in 1788 by a pupil of D'Eslon, one de Mainauduc, who remained in this country for some years, teaching and holding private demonstrations. In the last decade of the eighteenth century many other professors of the art of Mesmerism sprang up in London and the provinces, and appear to have found the profession profitable—Holloway, Miss Prescott, Loutherbourg, and others. The last-named lecturer's demonstrations at Hammersmith in 1790 were so crowded that three thousand persons are reported to have attended on one evening.[1] The craze, however, seems to have died out in a few years without leaving any serious traces even on popular belief, and without apparently producing any effect on scientific opinion.

In 1798 Perkins' *Metallic Tractors* came upon the scene; and after that date all interest in Mesmerism seems to have completely disappeared. At any rate, we hear little more of it in this country for a full generation. In 1828 Richard Chenevix, F.R.S., an Irish gentleman who had resided for some years on the Continent, and had there frequent opportunities of witnessing the magnetic treatment, came to this country and gave demonstrations before a large number of persons in London, Dublin, and elsewhere. Amongst those who witnessed his experiments were Faraday, Sir B. Brodie, Dr. Henry Holland, Dr. Prout, and many other medical men.[2]

The interest excited, however, appears to have been short-

[1] *Animal Magnetism*, etc., by George Winter, M.D. Bristol, 1801.

[2] See his articles on "Mesmerism, improperly denominated Animal Magnetism," published in the *London Medical and Physical Journal* of 1829.

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lived, and five years later J. C. Colquhoun complains in *Isis Revelata*[1] that, "of late our medical men seem liable to the reproach of having almost entirely neglected the most important labours of their professional brethren upon the Continent," *i.e.* in connection with Mesmerism.

In 1837 "Baron" du Potet, who had assisted seventeen years previously at some experiments in action at a distance at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, came to London to practise Mesmerism. He obtained an introduction to Elliotson, whose interest in the subject had already been awakened by Chenevix. Elliotson allowed du Potet in the first instance to mesmerise several patients at University College Hospital. Shortly afterwards, however, he undertook the mesmeric treatment of the patients himself, and succeeded in evoking the somnambulic state and many singular phenomena in connection with it, notably in two sisters named Okey. The matter caused some stir. Many men of science and other persons of distinction, including even royal personages, came to the hospital to see the marvels. So great was the crowd that Elliotson applied to the Council for permission to hold demonstrations in one of the theatres of the college. Permission was refused, and he was finally requested, in the interests of the hospital, to discontinue the practice of Mesmerism within its walls. He replied by resigning, in the autumn of 1838, his professorship and severing his connection with the hospital.

The objection of the hospital authorities to the use of Mesmerism was not altogether ill-founded. Elliotson had not, indeed, confined himself to using the mesmeric sleep as an auxiliary in therapeutics. He claimed to demonstrate many other phenomena of a dubious kind, especially the extraordinary influence of metals and other substances in conveying and enhancing the virtues of the mesmeric effluence. Gold, silver, platinum, water, and the moisture of the skin were found to transmit it; copper, zinc, tin, pewter, etc., unless wet, were non-conductors. Of the conductors, nickel and gold were said to be the best; but the mesmeric influence as transmitted by nickel was of an extremely violent and even dangerous character. Some of the most striking effects were produced by gold: thus, if a sovereign, mesmerised by being retained in the operator's hand, were placed in the hand of one of the Okeys, it would cause cramp, either local or general, trance, or coma, the

[1] *Isis Revelata: an Inquiry into the Origin, Progress, and Present State of Animal Magnetism.* Edinburgh, 1833.

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effect being, it was alleged, strictly proportioned to the strength of the original dose of mesmeric fluid communicated to the metal. Analogous effects were observed if a sovereign was placed successively in the hands of several hospital patients and thence transferred to the hand of the sensitive, the effect produced in the latter varying in strength with the state of the patients' vitality. If mesmerised sovereigns were placed in a pewter vessel, the influence would be gradually transmitted to the sensitive's hand. In stooping to pick up a mesmerised sovereign from the floor, the Okeys would suddenly become cataleptic, as their hands approached the metal, and remain fixed in a stooping position. Dr. Herbert Mayo records[1] a still more striking experiment. It sufficed for the Mesmerist to gaze intently at a stone mantelpiece, and to place a sovereign on the spot where his gaze had fallen, for the metal to become imbued with the mesmeric virtue and to produce the characteristic reactions with a sensitive subject.

Water and other substances could also be mesmerised; the sensitives had prevision of the course of their own diseases; and transposition of sensation, to the pit of the stomach or the general surface of the skin, was also occasionally observed. Mr. Thomas Wakley, editor of the *Lancet*, had at first opened his columns to the recital of these "beautiful phenomena," as Elliotson was wont to call them. But in the month of August, 1838, he determined to test them for himself. On the 16th and 17th of that month Elliotson brought the two Okeys to Wakley's house, and there, in the presence of several medical men, a series of experiments were made. On the first day the violent contortions and muscular cramp, which were the characteristic results of contact with mesmerised nickel, were produced when the nickel—unknown to Elliotson and most of the company—was safe in the waistcoat pocket of one of the spectators. It was shown in a further series of experiments that unmesmerised water could produce sleep, whilst water which had been carefully mesmerised had no effect; and that whilst three or four mesmerised sovereigns could be handled with impunity, well-marked catalepsy was produced when Jane Okey stooped to pick up a sovereign which had merely been warmed in hot water, without human contact at all.[2]

Some little triumph in a successful demonstration of this kind is no doubt permissible. The experiments so far as they went were conclusive enough. But Mr. Wakley's jubi-

[1] *Lancet*, 1st Sept., 1838. [2] *Ibid.*, 1st Sept., 1838.

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lation appears to us at once ill-natured and excessive. It was ill-natured, for he had not "exposed" the Okeys, and his insinuations against their honesty were apparently without justification. So far as can be discovered, neither he nor anyone else showed any valid reason for doubting the good faith of these two girls. It was excessive, because his experiments were not, as he supposed, conclusive against the claims of Mesmerism; they were conclusive merely against certain fanciful and extravagant theories of Dr. Elliotson. However, Mr. Wakley's views as to the value of his demonstrations appear to have found acceptance with the profession generally. His article is commonly referred to by contemporary writers as the exposure at once of the Okeys and of the pretensions of the Mesmerists; and the columns of the *Lancet* and other medical journals were closed for some time to come against the partisans of the new science.

In all the circumstances it is perhaps scarcely a matter for wonder that Elliotson in the course of the next few years seems to have made but few converts. The interest in the subject, indeed, appears again to have been in some danger of flickering out, when in 1841 another Frenchman, La Fontaine, came to this country on a lecturing tour. He met with striking success, especially in the provinces; and it is to his demonstrations that many of the writers on Mesmerism of that time, including Braid himself, owed their first impulse to investigate. The next few years saw the appearance of many lecturers on the subject in this country, and of a very considerable literature.[1]

In the year 1843 there appeared for the first time two periodicals devoted to the subject: the *Zoist*, under the

[1] Exclusive of the books already mentioned, the chief works consulted in drawing up this account of the English Mesmerists have been—

Rev. Chauncey Hare Townshend, *Facts in Mesmerism*. London (second edition), 1844. The first edition appeared in 1839.

James Braid, M.R.C.S.E., *Neurypnology* (London, 1843); *The Power of the Mind over the Body* (1846); *Magic, Witchcraft, Animal Magnetism, etc.* (1852).

W. Newnham, M.R.S.L., *Human Magnetism*. 1845.

Spencer T. Hall, *Mesmeric Experiences*. 1845.

Harriet Martineau, *Letters on Mesmerism*. 1845.

Reichenbach's *Researches*, translated by Gregory. 1850. (A preliminary sketch of Reichenbach's results had been published by Gregory in 1846.)

W. Gregory, M.D., Professor of Chemistry in the University of Edinburgh, *Letters on Animal Magnetism*. 1851.

J. W. Haddock, M.D., *Somnolism and Psycheism*. Second edition. 1851.

James Esdaile, M.D., *Natural and Mesmeric Clairvoyance*. 1852.

Edwin Lee, M.D., *Animal Magnetism*. 1866.

Ashburner, *Philosophy of Animal Magnetism*. 1867.

Sir John Forbes, *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism*. 1845.

And the *Zoist* and *Phreno-Magnet*, *passim*.

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direction of Drs. Elliotson and Engledue, which continued until 1856; and the *Phreno-Magnet*, edited by Spencer T. Hall, which lasted for one year only. Of the *Phreno-Magnet*, which represented the popular side of the movement, without serious pretensions to science of any kind, something will be said later. In the first instance it will be convenient to consider the views held by the medical Mesmerists—Elliotson, Esdaile, Haddock, etc.—and of other writers, such as Gregory and Townshend, who may fairly be classed with them. Apart from the purely medical aspect of the question—the efficacy of Mesmerism as a therapeutic agent and in relieving pain, to which the pages of the *Zoist* are mainly devoted—the Mesmerists of that date lay stress upon three main classes of phenomena—(1) certain physical effects regarded as proving the actual transmission of a fluid or physical force from the operator or from inanimate substances to the subject; (2) Phreno-Mesmerism; (3) community of sensation and clairvoyance.

(1) As already indicated, all the writers on Mesmerism at this period, with the solitary exception of Braid, had inherited from the Animal Magnetists the conception of a physical effluence passing from operator to subject as the agent in producing the mesmeric sleep. This effluence was, indeed, no longer conceived of as identical with the hypothetical magnetic fluid, though analogies between the phenomena of Mesmerism on the one hand and those of electricity and magnetism on the other were generally recognised. The mesmeric fluid was by most identified with the hypothetical nervous or vital fluid. The act of mesmerising was commonly supposed to involve a flow from the active organism, or that of superior vitality, to the passive or less highly vitalised. The weight on the eyelids felt by the patient, the pricking, the slight feeling of cold, and other subjective sensations were adduced as evidence of this physical effluence; and the mesmeric coma itself was by some regarded as the result of a determination of nervous fluid to the brain.[1] The fluid, being identical, or at least closely associated with the nervous force, was, like it, under the control of the will. The fluid formed an aura, or nerve atmosphere, round the human body. It was further capable of impregnating inanimate substances, and by them being communicated in turn to the sensitive. Elliotson himself claimed to have formulated no theory as to the nature of the mesmeric agency. But his belief in mesmerised metals and the other phenomena ex-

[1] Esdaile, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

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hibited by the Okeys certainly points to some conception such as that above indicated as being provisionally, at all events, accepted by him. And other writers of the time, Esdaile, Townshend, Gregory, Haddock, Newnham, and the rest, had no such reserve. They were satisfied that there was a physical effluence of some kind. Esdaile, in particular, made frequent use of mesmerised water as a medicine or an anæsthetic, both for internal and external application. Again, a patient could be thrown into mesmeric catalepsy by clasping the arms of a chair on which the operator had breathed, or by merely walking across a portion of the floor which the operator had impregnated with his mesmeric virtue by the same method.[1] Other experiments showed that the force could, in certain cases, be reflected from a mirror. But action at a distance, unknown to the patient—since the effects produced could not in such a case be attributed to the imagination—was commonly regarded as a crucial proof of physical transmission of force. All the writers cited give numerous instances, some of which will be quoted in the next chapter, of patients in another room or another house being entranced without their knowledge that the experiment was being made. Esdaile claims to have succeeded, at the first attempt, in catalepsing, in open court, three natives who were wholly ignorant of his intentions. One of these patients, moreover, was actively conversing with the judge and Moulavies whilst the experiment was being made.[2]

Further, various substances were supposed to act on the sensitive by their intrinsic virtues. The north pole of the magnet attracted, the south pole repelled. Diamonds and opals produced agreeable sensations; the emerald was unpleasing, and the sapphire positively painful.[3] But with the publication in 1845 of Reichenbach's researches, and their introduction in the following year to this country by Professor Gregory, the few scattered observations on manifestations of the kind last referred to received independent and apparently overwhelming confirmation. Baron von Reichenbach himself was a man of scientific attainments; a chemist and metallurgist of some repute. His subjects were very numerous, and he estimated that one-third of the people whom he tried were sensitive in some degree. In the second part of his work he gives a list of nearly sixty persons with whom he had obtained results. The list included, besides many ladies of title, a baron, a chevalier, a councillor, professors of physical science,

[1] Esdaile, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127; Newnham, *op. cit.*, p. 320; and elsewhere.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 67–9. [3] Townshend, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

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several physicians, two curators of museums, and many other persons of good position and education. The majority of these persons were experimented with in the normal state, though some of the best subjects were spontaneous somnambules and cataleptics. Reichenbach claimed to show that all these persons were, in a greater or less degree, susceptible of receiving various sensations from magnets, crystals, and practically all other substances in the universe in their degree —the planets and fixed stars themselves not excepted. For the effluence assumed to produce these sensations he proposed the name *odyle*, or *odic force*. The sensations were broadly of two kinds—vague feelings of temperature, which were either pleasant or unpleasant, and quite definite perceptions of light and colour. The latter required a higher degree of sensitiveness in the percipient. Magnets, crystals, and the human body excited sensations of the vague kind in the highest degree, and all other bodies in their electro-chemical order; potassium and the metals generally exciting warmth and a disagreeable feeling, oxygen and the electro-negative bodies coolness and a pleasurable sensation. But the effects of the odylic light were even more striking. The human fingers radiated light; so did the poles of the magnet—each pole in a fairly strong magnet being capped with flames, reddish yellow from the south pole, and bluish green from the north. A similar polarity was observed in the luminous emanations from crystals. Each elementary substance had its distinctive light, the metals being most conspicuous. Copper, iron, bismuth, nickel, mercury, osmium, rhodium, tellurium, etc., had a red glow, each differing, however, from the other; in lead, cobalt, palladium, etc., the flame was blue; silver, gold, cadmium, diamond, shone white, etc., etc. A sensitive could even see the glow of the odylic matter over the bodies of the sick in hospitals; and a column of faintly luminous vapour would hover over a newly made grave.[1] This odylic radiance was capable of illuminating other objects. It produced no effect on a thermometer, but it could be concentrated by a lens, reflected from a mirror, and was liable to be absorbed by the glass of the percipient's spectacles. To those who could see it the luminous appearance was so distinct, and so lasting, that one or two artists who

[1] A similar phenomenon was attested, and a similar explanation offered, by the alchemists. Thus Maxwell (*De Medicina Magnetica*, Book I. p. 9), "Ex dictis caussa manifesta videtur cur circa sepulcra violentâ morte interemtorum spectra obversentur: nam spiritu vitali humidoque radicali nondum plane dissoluto anima hæret, et exhalationibus hoc spiritu humidoque impregnatis formam humanam tribuit."

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happened to be amongst the Baron's sensitives drew what they saw. The English translation is enriched by reproductions of such drawings, showing magnets, a human hand, a flower, a lady's face, and other objects illuminated by their own odylic radiance.

The obvious good faith and apparent care with which Reichenbach's experiments had been performed; their elaborate and varied nature; the large number of his witnesses; their unimpeachable respectability and extraordinary unanimity; his imposing lists of chemical substances arranged in odylodynamic order; his diagrams showing the diurnal variations of the odylic force in the human body, and all the display of scientific machinery in his work were calculated to produce a profound impression on the English Mesmerists. Elliotson, Gregory, Haddock, and others at once experimented on Reichenbach's lines, and found that their somnambules also could experience the required sensations, in due gradation of strength, from various electro-negative and electro-positive bodies; and could see flames of the appropriate colour proceeding from the human body, the poles of a magnet, or anything else that was presented to them.

Against a theory so abundantly supported by experiment, argument and demonstration were alike used in vain. Bertrand had already, more than twenty years before, indicated the true explanation of the similar phenomena observed in his own day. Braid now, working on independent lines, arrived at a like conclusion. In his *Power of the Mind over the Body* he contends that the whole of the phenomena are explicable as due to the subjects' imagination, acting on slight hints unconsciously furnished by the experimenters. He is by no means desirous, indeed, of belittling the work of Reichenbach or his English translator. "Better-devised experiments," he says, "or a more laborious and painstaking effort . . . I have never met with in any department of science."[1] But he points out that the observers were not sufficiently on their guard against two sources of error: the extraordinary acuteness of the organs of the special senses and the enhanced receptivity of the mind in the somnambulic condition. He describes a number of experiments made by himself on private persons, some wide awake, some when hypnotised, in which all the characteristic results described by the Mesmerists appeared, when no magnet or other odylic substance was acting, and

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

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opportunity of exalting "the old-established modes of mesmerising" at the expense of "the coarse method practised by Mr. Braid."[1]

(2) Elliotson had been from an early period an enthusiastic phrenologist. He had in 1824 founded the Phrenological Society of London, and was in 1843 the President of that society and on the Council of the Phrenological Association. The *Zoist* itself had as a sub-title, "A Journal of Cerebral Physiology and Mesmerism." Mesmerism, indeed, gave powerful aid to the science of phrenology; for it was soon found that if in the somnambulic state the patient's head was touched by the finger of the Mesmerist, each of the organs mapped out by Gall and Spurzheim could be made to yield a prompt and characteristic reaction. It is not a little curious to note that some of the medical journals of the day in their comments on the movement lamented that a comparatively respectable study should be contaminated by its alliance with the absurdities of Mesmerism. Naturally, in the hands of the Mesmerists, abundant proof was soon forthcoming of the truth of phrenology. Perhaps almost too abundant, for an American Phreno-Mesmerist—as will be seen later—took occasion to discover one hundred and fifty new organs and to demonstrate them past dispute on the heads of his somnambules. With Elliotson, it should be pointed out, phrenology connoted a rather crude materialism; all mental phenomena, according to him, were "produced" by the brain, much as bile is produced by the liver; and he frankly used this weapon to combat the belief "in a certain thing called Soul and immaterial" and "the useless belief of the immortality of this Soul."[2]

It was natural that this particular development should not find favour with all the supporters of Mesmerism. Townshend discreetly evades all mention of the subject. Newnham devotes a chapter to "the pretensions of Phreno-magnetism,"

[1] *Zoist*, vol. iii. p. 345. In vol. ix. p. 316 a pamphlet of Braid's is cited with other books at the head of a review, but the reviewer does not mention Braid's name in the course of his article. I have come across one or two other incidental references (see especially vol. xi. pp. 391, 395), but Braid's name does not appear in the index of the *Zoist* at all. This is, indeed, not conclusive as to its absence from the text. The Mesmerists paid scant attention to such minor matters as indices and dates. It is a trifling point, but none the less "significant of much," that whilst each of Braid's books has a good index, none of the books here quoted by Colquhoun, Newnham, Reichenbach, Esdaile, Townshend, Haddock, Gregory, etc., have any index at all; and the index to the *Zoist* is meagre and extremely inaccurate, whilst the proof-reading was so careless that the French quoted is often quite unintelligible.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iii. pp. 423, 424.

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and whilst apparently admitting some of the phenomena, suggests that they may be due to thought-transference between the operator and subject. But Braid, sceptical of the "higher phenomena" of Mesmerism generally, expressed himself in his earlier writings as "quite certain as to the reality" of these particular manifestations. In his *Neurypnology* he records, in brief, twenty-five out of forty-five cases in his own practice in which he had produced demonstrations of phreno-hypnotism; and expresses himself as satisfied that in most of these forty-five cases the patients knew nothing of phrenology, and that the manifestations were evoked "simply by contact or friction over certain sympathetic points of the head and face, without previous knowledge of phrenology, trickery, or whispering, or leading questions." A single illustration may be quoted:—

A gentleman who had been present at a previous demonstration "was so much astonished and gratified with what he had seen that he begged I would try one of his daughters. I hypnotised the eldest, and all the manifestations came out quite as decidedly as in her cousin. Under 'adhesiveness' and 'friendship' she clasped me, and on stimulating the organ of 'combativeness' on the opposite side of the head, with the arm of that side she struck two gentlemen (whom she imagined were about to attack me) in such a manner as nearly laid one on the floor, whilst with the other arm she held me in the most friendly manner. Under 'benevolence' she seemed quite overwhelmed with compassion; 'acquisitiveness,' stole greedily all she could lay her hands on, which was retained whilst I excited many other manifestations; but the moment my fingers touched 'conscientiousness,' she threw all she had stolen on the floor, as if horror-stricken, and burst into a flood of tears. On being asked, 'Why do you cry?' she said, with the utmost agony, 'I have done what was wrong, I have done what was wrong.' I now excited 'imitation' and 'ideality,' and had her laughing and dancing in an instant. On exciting 'form' and 'ideality,' she seemed alarmed, and when asked what she saw, she answered, 'The D——l.' 'What colour is he?' 'Black.' On pressing the eyebrow and repeating the question, the answer was 'red,' and the whole body instantly became rigid, and the face the most complete picture of horror which could be imagined. 'Destructiveness,' which is largely developed, being touched, she struck her father such a blow on the chest as nearly laid him on the floor. Had I not endeavoured to restrain her, he must have sustained serious injury. Having now excited 'veneration,' 'hope,' 'ideality,' and 'language,' we had the most striking example of extreme ecstasy, and on being aroused she was quite conscious of all that had happened, excepting that she had heard music, and had been dancing. Her 'philo-progenitiveness' was admirable."[1]

[1] *Neurypnology*, pp. 135, 136.

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Braid from the first rejected the phrenological explanation of the phenomena. He believed the results were due to stimulation of the nerves of the scalp, either as calling into play muscles associated with the expression of certain emotions, or, quantitatively, as producing different emotional reactions according to the varying sensibility of the part of the integument affected. But if we can place any confidence in Braid's description of the results attained, and can share his conviction that the subjects were ignorant of the position of the phrenological organs and of the results to be expected, the real interest of the matter for us is that no adequate explanation on physiological lines has yet been offered. Modern physiology would probably find it easier to reject Braid's facts than to accept his tentative explanations.[1]

(3) Finally, the chief writers on Mesmerism of this period, again with the exception of Braid, believed in "community of sensation," that is, the ability of certain somnambules to share in the sensations, especially those of touch, taste, and pain, experienced by a person in *rapport* with them; and also in clairvoyance. Clairvoyance, as used by the writers of this time, covered two different classes of phenomena: (1) perception of objects near at hand, but placed in a position (*e.g.* behind the patient's back, or in a closed box) where normal vision would be impossible; and (2) travelling clairvoyance, or the vision of scenes at a considerable distance alleged to be unknown to the percipient and often to any person present.

Elliotson himself, whilst accepting apparently the phenomena of community of sensation at an early stage in his investigations, remained until 1841 doubtful as to the reality of the alleged "seeing with the eyes closed," and was not satisfied of the reality of travelling clairvoyance until 1844; even as late as 1845 he had never met with an instance of the faculty in a case of his own.[2] Esdaile also, though he has no doubt of the reality of the phenomena, even in 1852 had himself witnessed but a single case of clairvoyance.[3]

[1] *Neurypnology* was published in 1843. In reviewing some years later the whole subject of Hypnotism (*Magic, Witchcraft*, etc., third edition, 1852), Braid makes, so far as I can discover, no explicit mention of phrenology—an omission the more significant since he had devoted much space in his earlier work to records of experiments in this direction. From a passage on page 71, however, it may perhaps be inferred that, in looking back on the matter, he was not quite satisfied with the conditions under which the results were attained. Possibly more than he supposed was due to previous training of a subconscious kind, and much also to inadvertent suggestion on his own part and that of the spectators.

[2] See *Zoist*, vol. ii. p. 477, and vol. iii. p. 107.

[3] *Natural and Mesmeric Clairvoyance*, p. 96. London, 1852.

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But numerous instances of the alleged faculty, as exercised both at close quarters and at a considerable distance, were published by Townshend, Gregory, Haddock, and others in their books and in the columns of the *Zoist* itself. An attempt will be made in the two succeeding chapters to estimate the significance of the phenomena reported under this head. For the present purpose it is sufficient to note that belief in the mesmeric trance was at this time associated, in the writings of nearly all its leading adherents, with belief in community of sensation and clairvoyance; and few were found to imitate Elliotson's wise reserve in the matter, and speak only of what they had seen and tested for themselves.

It will be seen that Mesmerism came before the British public unfairly handicapped. Even the bare fact of the trance itself—which, as Bertrand had already shown, manifested close affinities to various spontaneous states, some of them by no means rare—could hardly win its way to recognition, weighted as it was with a mass of dubious and incredible phenomena, and forced to subserve ill-considered and grandiose theories, which were hardly less extravagant when they avowedly confined themselves to the physical world than when they frankly leapt the barrier and proclaimed themselves transcendental. Many of the phenomena on which these speculations were based were obviously capable, as Wakley and Braid had shown, of being explained as due to imposture or imagination. The effects were unquestionably in most cases subjective, and it made little difference as regards the proof of a new physical agency whether the feelings which the subject claimed to experience were really felt or deliberately simulated. Most of the medical journals of the day seem to have adopted the less charitable view, as on the whole the easier interpretation of what they witnessed. I cannot find any justification for this assumption of fraud, even in such a case as the Okeys. But when applied, as it was commonly applied, to demonstrations of painless surgery, the assumption becomes preposterous. Indeed, one cannot help suspecting a certain confusion of thought somewhere. The Okeys imagined they felt peculiar sensations from mesmerised metals, or else they pretended to feel—what did it matter, since in either case there was nothing to feel! But the argument was not of universal validity. To the man whose leg was cut off during the trance it obviously mattered a great deal whether he imagined he felt no pain or only pretended to feel none. Nor was the distinction without interest of a more general kind,

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for if the patient in such a case imagines he feels no pain, there is no pain to feel; and in the days before the introduction of anæsthetics that was no light matter.

The opposition of the medical profession to the employment of Mesmerism in order to give relief from the pain of surgical operations is one of the most singular episodes in the history of science. James Esdaile, a Scotch surgeon practising in Calcutta, who had had his attention drawn in 1845 to the subject, and had found that the natives of India were remarkably susceptible to mesmeric influence, performed many extensive and severe operations on patients during the trance. His proceedings naturally excited attention in India, and the medical profession, whilst laughing at Esdaile for his folly, freely insinuated that the alleged insensibility was simulated. The *Calcutta Medical Journal*, for instance, described his patients as "a set of hardened and determined impostors." In January, 1846, Esdaile reported to the Calcutta Medical Board the results of seventy-five operations —the removal of monstrous tumours, amputations of limbs, etc.—performed without pain, and offered to demonstrate the reality of the influence. Finding his application ignored, he appealed later in the same year direct to the Government. A small committee of investigation was appointed, which, as the result of observations on ten cases, reported that "by the mesmeric method sleep could be so deepened as to permit of the performance of severe surgical operations without pain, *according to the declarations of the patients*." Further than this the committee declined to go, but they expressed strong doubts as to the expediency of extending the mesmeric treatment generally. The Governor-General, however, on the receipt of the report, placed Esdaile in charge of a small hospital, that he might have full opportunity for pursuing his researches, and shortly afterwards appointed him Presidency Surgeon. But the general introduction of chloroform and other anæsthetics a year or two later caused popular interest in Mesmerism to cease. The feeling of the profession on the subject is aptly illustrated by an utterance of Dr. Duncan Stewart, one of the official visitors to Esdaile's Mesmeric Hospital, "It is time to throw away mummery and work above board, now that we have got ether."[1]

In this country the determined antagonism of the medical profession found similar expression. The Okeys, and, in fact, mesmeric subjects generally, were habitually referred to by

[1] See Esdaile's *Natural and Mesmeric Clairvoyance* and other works, and the *Zoist*, *passim*.

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medical men as impostors; the *Lancet* expressed the opinion that Mesmerism would always flourish "wherever there are clever girls, philosophic Bohemians, weak women, weaker men."[1] One Madame Plantin, whose breast had been removed in Paris by M. Cloquet, in the mesmeric trance, died a few days after the operation. There were English surgeons who did not scruple to say that the strenuous efforts which she made to conceal her anguish during the operation had hastened her death.[2] The first considerable operation performed in England in the mesmeric trance took place in 1842 at Wellow, in Nottinghamshire, the patient being one James Wombell, whose leg was amputated above the knee. Mr. Topham, a London barrister, was the Mesmerist, and the operation was performed by Mr. Squire Ward, M.R.C.S. An account of the case was read before the London Medical and Chirurgical Society at their meeting on November 22nd, 1842. The paper was received with much disfavour, many of the medical men present expressing their opinion that the alleged insensibility was simulated, and that Wombell had been trained to bear pain without betraying any signs of it. In the interval before the next meeting the authors published the paper on their own account,[3] and the Society gladly took advantage of this breach of etiquette to expunge all notice of the discreditable transaction from their minutes. But this was not enough for the opponents of Mesmerism. It was freely stated by medical men in the public Press and elsewhere, whenever the subject of Mesmerism was under discussion, that James Wombell had subsequently confessed to a wicked deception; that he had in fact felt the whole pain of the operation, but to gain his private ends had successfully concealed his feelings at the time. Elliotson took the trouble in 1843 to get a statement signed by the man himself and witnessed by the clergyman of the parish, giving the lie to the slander.[4] Eight years later it was revived. At a meeting of the same Society on December 10th, 1850, Dr. Marshall Hall "begged leave to communicate a fact of some interest to the Society. . . . He understood that this man (Wombell) had since confessed that he had acted the part of an impostor." Mr. Topham wrote to ask Dr. Hall for his authority. Dr. Hall replied, "The fact . . .

[1] *Lancet*, Sept. 15th, 1838.

[2] *Zoist*, vol. i. p. 209. For other illustrations of the incredulity with which the facts of hypnotic anæsthesia were first received by medical men, see Moll, *Hypnotism* (English trans., London, 1890), p. 329.

[3] *Account of a case of successful amputation of the thigh during the mesmeric state.* London, 1843.

[4] *Zoist*, vol. i. p. 210.

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was communicated to me by a gentleman whom I have known for the third part of a century, and whom I regard as among the most honourable and truthful of men." Dr. Hall refused to give up the name of his informant "without reserve," and he concluded his letter by calling upon Mr. Topham to take note—

"That I shall never cease to raise my voice against everything derogatory to my profession, whether originating unhappily within its ranks, or coming intrusively from without. That I am of opinion that, in these days of multifarious folly and quackery, every member of my profession is called upon in honour to do the same.

"That you will be pleased to consider this as a final communication."

Dr. Hall, however, wrote to his informant, asking him upon what evidence he had made the statement, and published in the *Lancet*, together with a copy of the above-cited letter to Mr. Topham, the following extract from his still unnamed correspondent's reply:—

"The confession of the man was distinctly and deliberately stated to me by a person in whom I have full confidence. It was in Nottinghamshire that I was told the fact, last August, and I fully believe it."

Dr. Marshall Hall had perhaps heard in his youth that a statement could be established in the mouths of two or three witnesses, and may have thought that he was fulfilling the Scripture by multiplying the links in his chain of anonymous tradition. The evidence, in fact, seems to have been good enough for the Medical and Chirurgical Society, for at a later meeting the president refused to hear Dr. Ashburner and Dr. Cohen when they rose to refute the slander; and the *Lancet* and other papers, in reporting the incident, expressed approval of the chairman's firmness and impartiality.[1]

Such, then, was at this time the attitude of the medical Press and the articulate members of the profession to Mesmerism. Some doctors even went further, and whilst denying the reality of Mesmerism, did not scruple to state that Mesmerists habitually used their influence for the basest purposes.[2]

But it must be admitted that the attitude of Elliotson, the champion of the English Mesmerists, and those of his chief

[1] *Lancet*, Dec. 28th, 1850, and March 1st, 1851. See also *Zoist*, vol. ix. pp. 88–106, where a full account of the incident is given.

[2] See, for instance, the "Harveian Oration" for 1848, by Dr. Francis Hawkins; and Elliotson's comments, *Zoist*, vol. vi. pp. 399–405. Similar charges are frequently made in the medical literature of the time.

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associates, was not conciliatory. The following epithets (omitting the names, which are given in full in the original) are taken at random from the index of the *Zoist:* "Dr. ——, his laughable folly; Dr. ——, his ignorance and folly; absurdity, nonsense, remarkable folly, folly and falsehood, discreditable conduct, untruth, egregious folly, sad conduct, false reports, stupid obstinacy, slobbering childishness," etc., etc. Nor were these hard words reserved for the opponents of Mesmerism. Elliotson and his colleagues on the *Zoist* resented so deeply Newnham's criticisms on the theory of Phreno-Mesmerism that they could not trust themselves to review his book, and that task is assigned to another.[1] On the other hand, whilst Elliotson and Engledue found themselves by no means in complete sympathy with Townshend, Sandby, and other clergymen, the columns of the *Zoist* are apparently freely open to their contributions. Of the attitude of the *Zoist* to Braid we have already spoken.

There was yet another section of Mesmerists at this time, represented by Spencer T. Hall, whose relations with the *Zoist* were far from cordial. Hall was not, apparently, a man of any scientific training. His attention was first drawn to Mesmerism by attending a lecture given by La Fontaine in Sheffield, in 1841 or 1842. Thereafter he devoted himself enthusiastically to the new science, and in 1843—the year which saw also the appearance of the *Zoist*—he started a monthly journal, the *Phreno-Magnet*, which, however, ran for one year only. In 1844 Spencer Hall was invited by her physician to mesmerise Harriet Martineau. He did so with conspicuous success, as told by Miss Martineau in her *Letters on Mesmerism.*

In the *Phreno-Magnet* we come in contact with the popular side of the movement. The men whose writings we have hitherto considered were possessed of some scientific attainments, or at least of scholarship and literary faculty. The pages of the *Zoist*, in particular, were mainly concerned with the therapeutic aspect of Mesmerism, and the other phenomena observed, however misinterpreted, were still valued primarily for their scientific interest. But the writers in the *Phreno-Magnet* were of a different class; their interests and activities were less restrained. Few of the persons who contributed to its pages were medical men, or, indeed, possessed special qualifications of any kind for the study.[2] In the pages of

[1] *Zoist*, vol. iii. p. 3.

[2] It is to be noted that James Braid wrote in December, 1842, just before the appearance of the first number, to express his interest and sympathy. (*Phreno-Magnet*, p. 25.)

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the *Phreno-Magnet*, as in the other writings of the period, are found numerous instances of community of sensation and travelling clairvoyance, but the records are not sufficiently detailed or exact to be of much value as evidence. Spencer Hall describes himself as a lecturer on Phrenopathy; and a large space in his organ is taken up month by month with chronicles of lectures delivered by the editor and others in various towns in the United Kingdom. In a retrospect published in December, 1843, Hall estimated that during the past year no fewer than three hundred persons had lectured and experimented in public in Great Britain, Ireland, and America, and this propagandist movement was concerned primarily, not with Mesmerism as a healing art, but with the science of Phreno-Mesmerism, or Phrenopathy. The phenomena on which the new "science" of Phreno-Mesmerism was founded had been before the world since 1841 or 1842. The honour of the first discovery was disputed, in America by Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Collyer, and the Rev. Laroy Sunderland; and by H. G. Atkinson, better known as the "Mentor" of Harriet Martineau, and others, in this country. Dr. Collyer had, indeed, by this time (1843) already ceased to believe, on philosophical and anatomical grounds, in the science which he claimed to have founded;[1] and Laroy Sunderland could at least assume a certain quantitative credit in the matter, for he had added no fewer than one hundred and fifty new organs to those previously mapped out by orthodox phrenologists. Some correspondents of the *Phreno-Magnet* bettered this record, and related that they had already tested and proved the existence of nearly two hundred organs.[2] Amongst these new faculties of the human mind which were thus given a local habitation we find acquativeness (*sic*), human nature, insanity, discontentment, opposiveness, love of pets; organs for shooting with crossbow, skating, aerostation, slinging, spearing, pulling, sculling, and many other manly sports; also two organs relating to a deity and a future state respectively.

Dr. Collyer, who had been a pupil of Elliotson's at University College Hospital, by no means relinquished with his belief in mesmero-phrenology his interest in Mesmerism, or, as he called it, Animal Magnetism. From the pamphlet already referred to we find that he laboured in the United States to make it known as a solemn truth, which must revolutionise the false philosophy of the past, and open to

[1] *Psychography, or the Embodiment of Thought*, by R. H. Collyer, M.D. Philadelphia, 1843.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 52, etc.

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man the secret of immortality. His title-page is adorned with a diagram representing two persons looking into a bowl of molasses, with dotted lines radiating from their foreheads to a point on the surface of the fluid. The experiment illustrated by this diagram is thus described: The subject was requested by Dr. Collyer to look into the bowl, the doctor doing the same. "When," he writes, "the angle of incidence from my brain was equal to the angle of reflection from her brain, she distinctly saw *the image* of my thought at the point of coincidence."

As already indicated, there was little sympathy between the medical Mesmerists and the supporters of the *Phreno-Magnet*. The first number of the *Zoist*, under the heading of "The Lecture Mania," contains some severe reflections on the ill-judged proceedings of a certain Mr. Brooks, who had been giving popular lectures followed by demonstrations of Phreno-Mesmerism on persons taken at hazard from the audience. Spencer Hall is characterised in the same article as "a gentleman influenced by good motives," but without scientific education. The writer of the article feared that the extravagance and want of judgment shown by the popular advocates of Mesmerism would prejudice the whole subject. The fear may have been justified, though to us now it seems to matter little whether the advocates of Phreno-Mesmerism taught that the mind expressed itself by means of twenty or two hundred organs, or whether the mesmeric effluence was demonstrated by radiation from a crystal or reflection from a bowl of treacle. Weighted, however, though it was with such dubious theories and disputable facts, it can hardly be doubted that in the ordinary progress of events the trance and the suggestion-phenomena generally would ultimately have won recognition, and that the accessory marvels would gradually have dropped out of sight as the part played by the imagination in their production became more clearly demonstrable. Indeed, in April, 1852, Gregory was able to congratulate the readers of the *Zoist*[1] on the fact that Sir D. Brewster and others, instead of ascribing the trance, anæsthesia, and other phenomena to imposture, had now publicly admitted their reality, and explained them as due to suggestion acting on the impressible organism of the sensitive. That having reached this point, the further advancement of the study should have been retarded for more than a generation was due to two special causes, the full effect of which could not at that time have been foreseen.

[1] *Zoist*, vol. x. p. 1, etc.

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The discovery in the years 1846–7 of the anæsthetic properties of ether and chloroform, and their rapidly growing use in medical practice, deprived the mesmeric trance of its most obvious utility. What effect that discovery had in checking the interest which had been aroused in Calcutta in Esdaile's mesmeric clinique we have already seen. If the effect was less marked in this country, it was only because the practice of operating in the trance was much less common, and had excited less attention. But another circumstance which did more to discredit Mesmerism throughout the civilised world was the gradual spread of the belief in Spiritualism, and the absorption by that movement of many of those who had been pronounced advocates of Mesmerism. Elliotson and his chief associates, indeed, for many years resisted the new doctrines, and in the later volumes of the *Zoist*[1] we find several articles dealing with the absurdities of the spirit-rappers. But from the outset many of the leading advocates of Mesmerism—Townshend, Sandby, Gregory,[2] J. W. Jackson, H. G. Atkinson—were disposed to see in table-turning and other physical manifestations the operation of the mesmeric or neuro-vital fluid; whilst others, sooner, as Ashburner, or later, as Elliotson himself, became converted to Spiritualism. In Elliotson's case the process of conversion did not stop at this point. Before his death he renounced his former materialism and embraced Christianity.[3] Again, of the American authors whose names figure so largely in the *Phreno-Magnet*, we find several who were afterwards prominent as Spiritualists.

So that from causes largely accidental and external to itself Mesmerism for a time lost whatever hold it had succeeded in gaining on the attention of sober-minded persons, and passed out of sight, until the labours of Liébeault, and later those of Bernheim at Nancy, of Charcot at the Salpêtrière, and of Heidenhain at Breslau, once more brought the subject into prominence.

[1] Especially vols. xi. and xii.

[2] Gregory appears to have been all but converted to the spiritualistic doctrine. In an interesting letter from him dated October, 1857, and published in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1865, pp. 451–3, occurs the phrase, "The higher phenomena appear to me to render the spiritual hypothesis almost certain." His widow, Mrs. Makdougall Gregory, for many years, until her death in the early eighties, held regular spiritualist séances, and her house was a place of meeting for the converts of the new faith.

[3] See obituary notice of Elliotson in the *Morning Post*, Aug. 3rd, 1868.

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CHAPTER IX

COMMUNITY OF SENSATION

THE effect which the writings of the Mesmerists of this period is likely to produce on a first reading is no doubt a profound distrust of human testimony altogether. The marvellous behaviour of magnets, crystals, and mesmerised sovereigns, and the Protean manifestations of clairvoyance, seem hardly more credible than old tales of lambs which grew on trees, and men whose feet expanded to serve as umbrellas. But a closer examination tends to show that the beliefs of Reichenbach and the rest were yet, perhaps, not so entirely unreasonable as their opponents believed. The phenomena were, as few now doubt, entirely subjective. But if the believers were wrong in seeing in them the manifestations of a new physical force, their critics were almost equally wrong in attributing them wholly to fraud. Fraud, no doubt, there was; but it was an accident, and not the essence of the problem. It was an unjustifiable assumption when employed without any attempt at proof in a case like the Okeys; it became preposterous when applied to persons like many of Reichenbach's sensitives—men and women of position, who were not at all likely to lend themselves to imposture merely to humour the folly of a friend and colleague; in the case of the patient who showed no pain under the surgeon's knife the charge was merely ludicrous.

But, in fact, this wholesale imputation of imposture, unjust to the subjects of it, was equally unjust to the Mesmerists themselves. Puységur was no doubt not a man of science; Deleuze, it might be urged, was only a botanist; Chenevix, Elliotson, Reichenbach, Gregory, and the rest may have been visionaries and fanatics. But the fact remains that many of them had done good work in medicine, chemistry, metallurgy, or some other department of physical science; and apart from a certain intemperance which marked, in some cases,

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the advocacy of their views—a defect which the example of their critics did little to remedy—there was nothing to be urged against the men themselves. Braid, it has been seen, generously acknowledged the care and ingenuity with which Reichenbach's experiments had been conducted; and it is Braid who has pointed out the two causes to which misinterpretation of the results attained was mainly due, the extraordinary suggestibility, to wit, of the hypnotic subject and the temporary exaltation of the senses in this state. Some years later, no doubt, other writers, no longer satisfied with an assumption which was fully as mischievous, and hardly more reasonable, than the theory of the Mesmerists, came to the same general conclusions as Braid. But by that time extraneous circumstances had already obscured the interest in the subject; and this change of view remained unfruitful.

But it may be doubted whether even suggestion and hyperæsthesia will explain everything. Braid's own recorded results in Phreno-Mesmerism, as already pointed out, can with difficulty be brought under such an explanation. He has shown that precautions were taken to exclude suggestion by normal means; and his tentative explanation on physiological lines was clearly inadequate. If we accept merely Braid's record of his own experiments, and leave out of account the enormous volume of similar observations tendered by less cautious observers, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the curious results described may have been in some cases due to a mental suggestion supplied by the expectation of the operator; and if we scrutinise the rest of the "magnetic" or mesmeric manifestations we shall find other evidence for the operation of mental suggestion. That evidence is by no means conclusive. The experimenters were for the most part prepossessed with the idea of a physical effluence; and they were not so far ahead of the medical knowledge of their day as to be fully alive to the possibilities of hyperæsthesia. But there are experiments recorded in which the precautions described—avowedly taken in order to preclude deception or suggestion of a normal kind—would appear to have been sufficient to exclude such suggestion even when acting on a hyperæsthetic subject. When, indeed, a sovereign "mesmerised" by merely looking at it was picked out from a number of other sovereigns, it may very fairly be said that the operator, who remained in the room and watched the experiment, probably gave sufficient indication by gesture or change of breathing to guide the sensitive; similar feats are performed

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in our day by professional "thought-readers." Again, "mesmerised" water may have been identified, as Braid suggests, even after the lapse of some minutes, by the smell alone. But there are experiments in which we have to assume some grave error in observation or record to make such explanations fit the results. Elliotson, for instance, tells us that a mesmerised sovereign would send the Okeys into the trance; and that whilst contact of the coin with iron would neutralise the influence, contact with other metals had no effect.

"Nothing," he writes, "could be more interesting than to see a charged sovereign or shilling lying in their hand, a screen being held between it and their head; and as soon as the hand began to close and the eyes to fix, to observe these effects instantly arrested and subside when a short iron rod was brought into contact with the metal, and augment again when it was withdrawn. I have often substituted a rod of silver or some other metal—for I had rods made of various metals precisely similar in form and size—when it was impossible the girl could know which was being used; and in the case of a leaden rod I myself should not have known by the eye at the moment, but to prevent confusion had put each into a separate pocket. The silver, copper, and lead had no neutralising power, and therefore never arrested or diminished the effect."[1]

A common experiment at this time to illustrate the power of "mesmeric attraction" was to mesmerise a particular object and let the patient, unawares, come in contact with it. Esdaile's *first* experiment of the kind was made at the hospital in Calcutta on a patient who could scarcely be supposed to have heard beforehand of the result anticipated, nor were the conditions of the experiment—an impromptu one—such as to afford much opportunity for any hint of what was expected reaching his mind by normal channels. Several gentlemen were present.

"Desiring them to observe, I seated myself in an armchair in the waiting-room, placed my hands on each of the knobs at the end of the arms, and then breathed on them. I now joined the company, and desired them to get the man I should send for to seat himself in the chair I had just vacated. The man was brought and manœuvred into the chair, where he was questioned about the operation he had undergone, etc., and was then desired to return to the ward.

[1] *Zoist*, vol. iv. p. 109. In Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism*, pp. 152, 153, a case is recorded in which the sensitive identified various gems held to her forehead concealed in the hand of the experimenter. She alleged that she experienced peculiar sensations from each gem.

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"He had naturally placed his hands on the knobs of the arms, and now attempted to rise, but stuck fast; and those present will not soon forget his look of amazement, first at one arm, and then at the other, and his bewildered look of inquiry towards me when he found himself in such a *fix*.

"His arms were found to be rigid and insensible to the shoulders, and the fingers were so firmly clutched upon the knobs of the chair that they could not be opened. He was relieved by upward passes along the arms; but for some time his fingers were in a painful state of spasms, which I had some difficulty in dissipating. I now left the room, and made passes along and breathed upon the floor near the door by which he had to return to his ward—the door being closed, of course. Returning to the party, I desired him to go away now, and he did; but he no sooner planted his foot outside the door than he became rooted to the spot, and was violently convulsed, calling upon me to come to him, that he was dying, etc." [1]

Another experiment much relied upon as proving the reality of the mesmeric effluence was the production of sleep at a distance. In the following case, quoted from Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism*, two previous trials on the same patient had been completely successful. In this instance, it will be noted, we have a double coincidence.

"The third trial that I made to mesmerise this patient from a distance was still more remarkable and decisive.

"One evening, when sitting with my family, the idea occurred to me, 'Could I mesmerise Anna M—— there as I then was, while she was in her own house?' to which I knew she was just then confined by slight indisposition. Acting on this thought, I begged all the party present to note the hour (it was exactly nine o'clock), and to bear me witness that then and there I attempted a mesmeric experiment.

"This time I endeavoured to bring before my imagination very vividly the person of my sleepwaker, and even aided the concentration of my thoughts by the usual mesmeric gestures; I also at the end of an hour said, 'I will now awake Anna,' and used appropriate gestures. We now awaited with more curiosity than confidence the result of this process.

"The following morning Anna made her appearance, just as we were at breakfast, exclaiming, 'Oh, sir! did you magnetise me last night? About nine o'clock I fell asleep, and mother and sisters say they could not wake me with all their shaking of me, and they were quite frightened; but after an hour I woke of myself; and I think from all this that my sleep must have been magnetic. It also did me a great deal of good, for I felt quite recovered from my cold

[1] *Natural and Mesmeric Clairvoyance*, pp. 126, 127.

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after it. After a natural sleep I never feel so much refreshed. When I sleep for an hour in magnetism, it is as if I had rested a whole night.' These were the words of Anna M——, noted down at the time as accurately as possible."[1]

In one case out of many cited by Haddock the effect appears to have been produced without the intention of the operator.

"On another occasion I was wishful to induce the mesmeric sleep on a lady for the relief of a rheumatic affection from which she was suffering. Finding the continual stare very fatiguing to my eyes, and also expecting to be called away by patients, it occurred to me that if I directed her to look steadfastly at something it might answer the same purpose, and allow me to leave her without interrupting the mesmeric action. I therefore arose and took a small magnet and suspended it by a wire from a hook in the ceiling. Emma was in the kitchen, situated *under* the room where I was operating, and knew nothing of my movements. In a few minutes the smell of burning arrested my attention, and I desired my daughter to go downstairs and ascertain the cause. She called me quickly to come down, saying that Emma was on fire. I ran down, and found her with her eyes closed, and *mesmerised*, and on her knees before the kitchen fire, engaged in sweeping the hearth, and her apron on fire from contact with a burning coal that had fallen from the grate; but of the fire she was unconscious, or at least she took no notice of it, and her attention was wholly directed to a point in the kitchen ceiling under where I had been sitting in the room above. Having asked her what she was doing or looking at, she replied, '*I want that magnet.*' I pretended not to understand her, and said, 'What magnet'? The reply was, 'That magnet hanging up there,' pointing accurately to its situation."[2]

The phenomena of "Community of Sensation" are also susceptible of explanation as being due to thought-transference. In its commonest form, indeed—the appreciation by the hypnotic of sensations of taste or smell experienced by the person with whom she was in *rapport*—it is difficult to exclude the possibility that indications may have reached the hyperæsthetic organs of sense by normal channels. Most of the edible substances in common use, in fact, give out a

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 314.

[2] Haddock, *Somnolism and Psycheism*, p. 92. Similar experiments have been performed with success during the last two decades by various French observers, of which the most noteworthy are those conducted by Professor Janet and Dr. Gibert at Havre. See *Revue Philosophique*, Feb., 1886; *Revue de l'Hypnotisme*, Feb., 1888; and *Proceedings S. P. R.*, vol. iv. p. 133, etc., vol. v. pp. 43-5; and elsewhere.

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sensible odour; and unless experiments of this kind are carried on at a considerable distance and with closed doors intervening, or care is taken to select substances as odourless as common salt (and I can find no record in the writings of this period of experiments conducted under such conditions), it seems probable that the results may be attributable generally to hyperæsthesia. The following case, however, recorded by Townshend, cannot be thus explained, and even though the Mesmeriser held the subject's hand, can hardly be accounted for by muscle-reading. Some successful trials of the usual kind with tastes and odours had first been made with the same subject.

"It now occurred to me to try the experiment which B—— had suggested with respect to the cognisance of form. With every precaution, I took up from a table, on which were many other articles, a small square box, and passed my finger over the edges. I, at the same time, asked the patient, 'Can you tell me what sort of a thing I am touching?' Upon this Miss T—— made motions with her fingers, as if she had the object under her own hand, and replied, 'It is something with edges like a box.' I next took into my hand a chessman, some parts of which were carved in points, and felt alternately the carved and uncarved portions of the piece. Between these she discriminated correctly, saying, 'Now it feels rough; now smooth'; and always before speaking she went through the same motions of touching with myself.

"One of the patient's sisters, without giving notice of her intention, went out of the room and fetched an egg, which she concealed carefully in her hand and gave me from behind. The patient now said, 'I feel something smooth and round.' Being urged to tell what it was, she said, 'I think it is a ball.' Stretching out my hand behind me, I whispered to one of the party to hurt me in some way; I was pricked with a pin, when my patient started and shook her hand as if she felt the injury. On being asked what she felt, she answered, 'As if they pricked my hand.'

"At another time, when I inquired if she suffered in any way, she replied, 'No, only my feet are very cold.' My own feet being exceedingly cold at the moment, I suspected that her feeling was sympathetic. I conjectured rightly, for, awaking soon after, she assured me that her feet were perfectly warm."[1]

Again, the following observation in the transference of pain seems free from objection, and the distance beween agent and patient was, it will be seen, considerable. Dr. Engledue writes in the *Zoist*:—[2]

[1] Townshend, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 70. [2] Vol. ii. pp. 269, 270.

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"In a drawing-room containing forty persons this experiment was performed, and I select and relate it here because it was not prearranged. After the patient had been entranced a gentleman requested to speak to me at the other end of the room. He engaged me in conversation, and whilst I was standing with my hands behind me, one of his companions suddenly pushed the point of a penknife into my thumb. Immediately the patient cried out, and rubbed the exact spot on her own hand which had been injured in mine. Another gentleman requested me to accompany him into the library, which adjoined the drawing-room. He closed the doors, and then said, 'I wish to tickle your ear with the end of a pen.' I requested him not to do so for a few minutes, for I have almost always noticed that if experiments are performed in too rapid succession the expected result does not take place; nay, more, I have frequently noticed that if experiments are too much crowded together, several minutes may elapse and the experiment be considered a failure, but after all the expected result may come out. My right ear was tickled for one minute. We then entered the drawing-room, and found the patient rubbing her left ear upon her shoulder and shuddering in the same manner that I had, and as every person does when the same stimulus is applied. . . .

". . . When my hair was combed in another room, my patient expressed great dissatisfaction, and complained that somebody was teasing her and pulling her hair.

"When I used a toothpick, she picked her teeth with a pin; and generally she did this on the same side and inserted the pin between the same two teeth that I did. This, however, was not invariable."

Sometimes the same phenomenon was observed in the higher senses, as in the following case, recorded by Mr. Jago, of Bodmin, and communicated to the *Zoist*[1] by Dr. Elliotson. Mr. Jago, it will be noted, suggests community of sensation as the explanation of the facts observed; he supposes the sensitive to be "seeing with his eyes."

"A person present was asked to put something in a cup, and, without saying what it was, to bring it to me in such a way that I might look in it, but that it would be impossible for Miss D—— to see what it contained. The cup was brought on a level with my eye. Having looked over the edge of it and seen what was in it, I desired that it might be taken away again; then turning to Miss D—— and placing my finger on the organ of language, I asked her, 'What's in that cup?' She instantly and without any doubtful tone of voice said, 'Cotton.' It was a little ball of cotton.

"Anxious to test this to the utmost, I asked a person to go out of the room and put something in a cup and bring it to me that I only

[1] *Zoist*, vol. iii. pp. 223, 224.

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might see what was in it, as before. This was done, and the cup again placed upon the table, which was at the opposite end of the room. Turning to Miss D——, I asked her, 'What's in it now?' 'Wafers.' This was perfectly true. 'How many are there?' 'Two.' 'What colours are they?' '*Green* and red.' The last answer is most extraordinary. By candlelight I thought the wafers were *white* and red. My question was repeated, 'Are you sure that one is *green*?' 'Yes.' 'Are you quite sure of this?—think.' 'Yes,' she replied rather sharply. Believing that this answer was incorrect, I desired to see the wafers again; one of them was a delicately pale green.

"Astonished at these results, I requested that the cup should be placed on the table with something in it, as before, but that neither myself nor Miss D—— should be told or be allowed to see what it contained. This was done. I then asked, 'What's in that cup now?' She paused as if thinking, and in about a minute said, 'I don't know.' 'Do you not really know?—think again.' 'No; I do not know.' I now directed a person to bring the cup to me as before, that I alone might see its contents. This was done, and in such a manner that it was impossible for Miss D—— to look; in fact, during the whole of this experiment her head was leaning a little forwards and her eyes were quite closed. Care was taken *to hold the cup above the level of her forehead* each time that it was brought near me, so that had her eyes been wide open she could not have seen what was in it.

"After I had looked at what had been put in the cup, I asked her, 'Do you know now what it is?' 'Yes; it is a thimble.' This was correct.

"Supposing her by some inscrutable means to be *seeing with my eyes*, I thought she might be able to describe any object which was known to me. I therefore began to question her about that of which I was certain she could have no previous knowledge. 'Do you know my dressing-case?' 'Yes.' 'How many bottles are there in it?' 'Two.' 'What colours are they?' 'A white and a *green*.' 'Are you sure that one of them is *green*?' 'Yes.' I had considered that bottle to be *blue*, and therefore supposed she had given me an incorrect reply; nor did I until the following morning convince myself that it was green. It is that particular shade of green which many find it difficult to distinguish from blue. Her answer was right, and though the question was repeated three or four times, she persisted in giving me the same reply. 'How many drawers are there in the case?' 'One.' 'How many locks are there?' 'Two.' 'What sort of case is it?' 'Bound with brass.' Had it been before her she could not have given a more correct description."

It is clear that in the latter part of this record the metaphor of seeing with the Mesmeriser's eyes no longer holds good. If the information given by the subject was not normally

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acquired—and illustrations of this faculty are so numerous that it is difficult to doubt that in some cases, at any rate, the information came through supersensory channels—we have to deal with a sympathy not of sensation but of thought. Some of the writers of this period, indeed, frankly recognise the existence of such a faculty of thought-transference, as Bertrand had before them.[1]

[1] For two instances of the kind see Townshend, *op. cit.*, pp. 324, 325.

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CHAPTER X

CLAIRVOYANCE IN ENGLAND

THE manifestations of what is known as "clairvoyance" present us with a more difficult problem than the phenomena of action at a distance and community of sensation discussed in the last chapter. As regards the so-called clairvoyance of objects at close quarters, or "seeing with the eyes closed," there seems little reason to doubt that the results vouched for by so many observers were due, as a rule, either to normal vision under somewhat unusual conditions, to deliberate fraud, or possibly in rare cases to hyperæsthesia of the sense of touch. In one case, indeed, it seems to me clear that the whole of the manifestations were due to fraud of a tolerably obvious kind. There was in those days a certain Major Buckley—a retired officer of the Indian Army. Major Buckley seems to have been an amiable old gentleman, with a fondness for taking parties of young ladies to the opera. His young friends repaid his hospitalities by manifestations of a very surprising kind. Their specialty was reading mottoes in nuts bought at the confectioner's—hazel-nuts or walnuts, the natural contents of which had been replaced by small sweetmeats and a piece of paper bearing a motto, the hole in the nut being filled in apparently with chocolate. Major Buckley himself seems to have been convinced of the genuineness of these performances; and so were some of the persons who witnessed them. Elliotson, though obviously suspicious, allowed accounts of the experiments to appear in the *Zoist*. A detailed report by Ashburner of a series of experiments at which he and Lord Adare assisted allows us to see how the feat was probably accomplished. The young women who were the seers had no doubt brought with them some nuts which had been previously opened and resealed, and contrived during the proceedings to substitute their own prepared nuts for those brought by the investigators. At any rate, it would appear

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that opportunity was again and again in the first series of experiments afforded for such substitution; and that when the nuts were marked, so as to prevent substitution, the experiments proved inconclusive.[1]

However, Major Buckley's experiments were not typical. They do not seem to have been accepted generally by those interested in the subject, nor—which is certainly curious—does this particular form of clairvoyance appear to have found any imitators outside Buckley's circle. But there were many subjects both in France and England at this time who claimed, or on whose behalf the claim was made, that they could see near objects when their eyes were closed and firmly bandaged, or when placed in absolute darkness. A well-known case was that of Mdlle. Pigeaire, whose claims were examined by the Academy of Medicine in Paris, in 1837, with negative results. At Plymouth, in 1846, the clairvoyant powers of a boy of fifteen, Thomas Laycock, were investigated by a committee of twelve responsible persons, who after plastering and bandaging his eyes, expressed themselves, by a large majority, as satisfied that his alleged power of supersensuous vision was genuine.[2] Townshend minutely describes similar performances on the part of a subject of his own, a French boy named E. A., and adduces the testimony of several independent observers. In all these cases—and they are but samples—many of the results, *as described*, seem hardly susceptible of explanation by the exercise of the normal senses. Townshend's subject, for instance, is described as seeing objects in absolute darkness, or when held at the back of his head, or behind a screen. Most commonly, however, the object to be seen was held in front of his eyes, which were assumed to be securely bandaged, and the interposition of a screen, a variation in the angle at which the object was held, or the addition of a further covering to the subject's head, interfered with success. It is quite clear, therefore, that in most cases the process of seeing with the eyes shut had some relation to the normal organs of vision; and it is not difficult to suppose that the few apparent exceptions referred to were due to malobservation or the neglect of essential precautions. As regards the singular freedom of vision possessed by youths whose eyes were in appearance securely bandaged, the experience of the S. P. R., as already stated, has shown that, with some persons, at any rate, a very small chink at the side of the

[1] *Zoist*, vol. vi. pp. 98–110 see also pp. 380–4.
[2] *Zoist*, vol. iv. p. 82.

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nose suffices for the purpose of vision; and that there is practically no means of blindfolding the eyes, without injuring the patient, which would preclude the possibility of vision by this means.[1]

The most notable success in this kind of clairvoyance was attained by a young Frenchman, Alexis Didier, who was brought to this country and exhibited by one Marcillet, whom Elliotson and others vouched for as a gentleman of high character and undoubted integrity. Alexis was, apparently, in the first instance thrown into a deep trance; his eyes were then bandaged, generally as follows: a pad of leather would be placed over each eye, and then a handkerchief would be tied diagonally across; over all a third handkerchief would be tied horizontally, and the interstices would be filled up with cotton wool. In these circumstances he would play *écarté* with great skill and rapidity; would know not only his own cards, but frequently those in his adversary's hand as well; would play correctly with his own cards face downwards on the table; would frequently, by request, pick out any named card when the whole pack was face downward. Further, he would—though generally with his eyes unbandaged and merely closed—decipher words written in sealed envelopes, describe the contents of closed packets, and read words and sentences several pages deep in any book which might be presented to him.

That the art by which these marvellous results were achieved was not that of the ordinary conjurer seems tolerably clear. Indeed, in 1847 Robert Houdin himself, having, at the instance of the Marquis de Mirville, paid two visits to Alexis, at which he played *écarté* in the usual fashion, presented a book in which Alexis read half a line some pages in advance, and received other proofs of the clairvoyant's powers, testified "qu'il est tout à fait impossible que le hasard ou l'adresse puisse jamais produire des effets aussi merveilleux."[2] As against conjuring of the familiar kind, Houdin's testimony is no doubt conclusive. As against the view here suggested, that the "clairvoyance" of cards and sentences in closed books, and so on, was probably to be explained as due to preternormal acuteness of vision, or of touch and vision, conditioned by the hypnotic trance, it is perhaps not so conclusive. No doubt Houdin, as a trained observer, if his attention had been specially directed to this possibility,

[1] See above, chap. v. p. 74, and references there given.

[2] *Des Esprits*, Js. E. de Mirville. Paris, 1854. 3rd edition. Vol. i. pp. 18-32.

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would have been better qualified than most persons to pronounce judgment upon it. But this acuteness of vision here supposed is a distinct thing from the rapid and comprehensive glance, the result of long training, which is, as we know from Houdin himself, a part of the conjurer's equipment, and might well pass for incredible even with an expert observer whose experience had lain in other directions.

As to the actual means by which the results were achieved, the accounts we possess are not sufficiently detailed to enable us to determine. The exact position of Marcillet is rarely mentioned; the proportion of failures to successes is hardly ever recorded, nor the nature of the failures. The table is described, if described at all, merely as "a card table," presumably, therefore, with only a slender strip of polished surface. In one case, indeed, we learn that the cards were highly glazed,[1] but we do not know if this was usually the case, or whether Alexis had other opportunities of seeing the cards by reflection from a polished surface. Nevertheless, from the descriptions of the performances given by many observers in the *Zoist* itself and in the periodical literature of the time, we can gather some indications of the probable *modus operandi*.[2] In any case, the bandaging could not have been accepted as satisfactory. But a writer in the *Morning Chronicle* tells us that he had himself been bandaged by a friend in the same way, and had managed to read distinctly. It was noticed, moreover, by several persons that Alexis contorted his face both during and after the process of bandaging; that he frequently touched or fidgeted with the bandages; that he held the objects to be looked at at curious angles, and changed their position, as if trying to get a better view. Envelopes and closed packages would be carried, for instance, to the stomach or the top of the head. Further, the card-playing appears to have been the only form of experiment which was pretty uniformly successful. Even

[1] *Zoist*, vol. ii. p. 496.

[2] See especially *Zoist*, vol. ii. pp. 393–409, 477–529; the detailed and, on the whole, impartial account by Dr. Forbes, F.R.S., in the *Lancet*, August 3rd, 1844; a letter in the *Morning Chronicle*, June 28th, 1844, signed "No Go"; the *Times*, June 25th, 1844; *Medical Times*, July 27th, 1844, and subsequent dates; various articles in the *Critic* for 1844 and 1845, etc. For an account of some later séances, given at Brighton in 1849, see *Animal Magnetism*, by Edwin Lee, M.D. (London, 1866), and *Zoist*, vol. vii. pp. 92 *et seqq.* Dr. Forbes (afterwards Sir John Forbes) published his account of two sittings with Alexis, also accounts of experiments with Adolphe Didier and other so-called clairvoyants, in a small volume, *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism* (London, 1845), which should be read by all interested in the subject.

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here there were many failures, but the failures seem to have predominated over the successes in other cases. Again, Alexis appears to have selected the passages which he was to read from amongst a large number presented to him. The contents of sealed envelopes could not be read in the hands of a sceptic; the seal must be broken, and the contents shown to a sympathetic witness. Marcillet was present in the room throughout the performance, and some of the numerous bystanders, if not actually confederates, were friendly and indiscreet.[1] Of all the feats, that of reading the words several pages deep in a book was the most strongly suggestive of trickery. This appears not to have been attempted, as a rule, until Alexis had already read some words on the open page, the book in his hand, with the text covered by a piece of paper or a handkerchief placed there by himself. Alexis would then separate a number of pages from ten to one hundred and fifty, holding them vertically before him, and offer to read some words on a particular part of the page several pages further on. It is not stated in any account which I have seen whether Alexis or the audience chose the particular spot on the page, but it is certain that Alexis could not indicate with even approximate correctness the number of pages deep. In one case the desired words were found eighty and one hundred and fifty pages further on respectively.

If this were all that Alexis had to show, we should perhaps be entitled to wonder at the simplicity of the numerous witnesses—lawyers, medical men, members of Parliament, and others—cited in the *Zoist*, who vouched for his performances. But there are two considerations which give us pause. In the first place, though it would have been difficult to prove this even at the time, and, of course, no certain proof is now possible, there are indications that his trance was genuine.[2] And if genuine, it is permissible to suppose, though the knowledge which he displayed had apparently been acquired by the exercise of the known senses, that he himself was innocent of deception in the matter. In the second place, at every séance, together with this display of conscious or unconscious jugglery, there occurred instances of "travelling clairvoyance" and thought-reading, which, if not genuine, involved deception of a more hazardous and complicated nature. Of course, fraud is the first explanation in a case of

[1] See Sir J. Forbes' observations on this point (*op. cit.*).

[2] On the other hand, Sir J. Forbes (*op. cit.*, p. 51) writes that it was not proved, nor even probable, that the mesmeric state was genuine.

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this kind. Alexis was a professional—he received on some occasions as much as five guineas a séance; and there is no strong improbability in the assumption that the respectable M. Marcillet was a confederate. And perhaps the most probable, though not necessarily the correct, explanation of his card-playing performances, is that of deliberate fraud. When, therefore, Alexis correctly described a medal enclosed in a casket covered with paper and sealed, we suspect that he may have succeeded in opening the casket unobserved, or that the lady who had brought it may have imprudently revealed its contents to those about her.[1] Or take the following incident, the account of which is compiled from notes made by the then Lord Adare (father of the present Earl of Dunraven) of a sitting with Alexis, which took place on July 2nd, 1844, at the house of M. Dupuis, in Welbeck Street. A corresponding, but rather fuller and more dramatic account of the incident is given by the Rev. G. Sandby, in a letter to the *Medical Times*, dated July 8th :—

"Colonel Llewellyn, who was, I believe, rather sceptical, produced a morocco case, something like a surgical instrument case. Alexis took it, placed it to his stomach, and said, 'The object is a hard substance, not white, enclosed in something more white than itself; it is a bone taken from a greater body; a human bone—yours. It has been separated, and cut so as to leave a flat side.' Alexis opened the case, took out a piece of bone wrapped in silver paper, and said, 'The ball struck here; it was an extraordinary ball in effect; you received three separate injuries at the same moment; the bone was broken in three pieces; you were wounded early in the day whilst engaged in charging the enemy.' He also described the dress of the soldiers, and was right in all these particulars. This excited the astonishment of all the bystanders, especially the gallant Colonel. This account is drawn up, not only from my own notes, but from Colonel Llewellyn's statement made after the séance, and from a written account given me by a lady who was sitting close by."[2]

On the hypothesis that the information given was normally obtained, we must suppose that Colonel Llewellyn was a garrulous old gentleman, who had betrayed his secret to someone in the room at the time; or that Marcillet or Alexis had by some means acquired beforehand knowledge of his history, and of his intention to attend the séance. Neither supposition can, of course, be dismissed as altogether improbable.

[1] *Zoist*, vol. ii. p. 516. [2] *Zoist*, vol. ii. pp. 510, 511.

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Or, to turn to examples of the so-called "travelling clairvoyance," when we read that on one occasion Alexis gave to Lord Frederick Fitz-Clarence a minute description of his visit to St. Cyr from Paris two days before the séance, it is natural to remember, even though Lord Frederick himself thought "nothing could be much more extraordinary," that his lordship was probably a well-known figure in Paris, and his journeyings matters of common report.[1] When we hear how the clairvoyant, sitting in London, described, at the request of Dr. Costello, an operation for lithotrity which the doctor had performed at Clifton two or three days before, we can but regret that the date of Dr. Costello's visit had apparently been arranged with Marcillet beforehand.[2]

Again, the Rev. Chauncey Hare Townshend relates that he paid a surprise visit to Marcillet in passing through Paris in October, 1851; that Alexis gave, in the trance, a surprisingly minute and accurate description of Townshend's house at Lausanne, its garden and surroundings, and even the subjects of the pictures hanging in the *salon;* passing on to give an equally circumstantial inventory of the narrator's house in Norfolk Street, London; of the maidservants there, the horses in the stables, and other details.[3]

The obvious remark on a case of this kind is that Townshend was a well-known writer on Mesmerism; that it was practically certain that he would at some time or another come to see Alexis; and that it would possibly be worth while for Alexis and his agents to "get up" as many facts as possible in connection with him, in order to afford a convincing proof of supernormal faculty. That the description of the maidservants in the house in London, and the grey horse in the stable with sores on its flanks, applied accurately to the time of the séance would only prove, on this hypothesis, that Alexis' Intelligence Department was up to date. It is true that this explanation becomes more and more difficult as it has to be applied to a wider and wider circle. But though successful clairvoyant descriptions of the kind appear to have been given at every séance, the reports which we possess are mostly at second-hand, or insufficiently detailed, and the names of persons concerned are frequently not given. Occasionally, as in the case of the séance at the house of the Rev. Thos. Robertson, on the 9th July, 1844, we have a full account, drawn up shortly after the event by one of the principal witnesses, which

[1] *Zoist*, vol. vi. pp. 417–9.
[2] *Medical Times*, July 27, 1844.
[3] *Zoist*, vol. ix. pp. 405, 406.

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reveals an amount of correspondence which certainly cannot be attributed to chance.[1] But a séance with Alexis, as in the case cited, appears to have been a kind of levée attended by some thirty or forty persons, so that he had considerable chances of utilising any information which he might have surreptitiously acquired; and the supposition that his display of apparent clairvoyance was, in fact, to be so explained, though it certainly implies the possession of highly trained confederates and singular good fortune in the chance of sitters, is not perhaps to be summarily dismissed. It is interesting to remark that Alexis himself expressly disclaimed any assistance from spirits in the matter.[2]

The hypothesis of a Private Inquiry agency — not unreasonable in the case of a professional clairvoyant, who received comparatively large sums for his performances—is more difficult to apply to the numerous other cases recorded in the literature of this period. There are, for instance, several striking reports in the *Zoist* of the clairvoyance of a young woman named Ellen Dawson, a patient of a London surgeon named Hands, who discovered the faculty in her by accident, and apparently allowed a few privileged persons to witness it in operation. But something could no doubt have been gleaned by a cunning and unscrupulous person from the gossip of servants, and in nearly every case a wide margin must be allowed for misdescription on the part of the narrator of the marvels.[3]

The following account, however, by the late Professor de Morgan is worthy of consideration, partly because of the intellectual distinction of the recorder, partly because there is no obvious source from which the information could have been derived :—

"I have seen a good deal of Mesmerism, and have tried it myself on —— for the removal of ailments. . . . But this is not the point. I had frequently heard of the thing they call clairvoyance, and had been assured of the occurrence of it in my own house, but always considered it as a thing of which I had no evidence

[1] *Zoist*, vol. ii. pp. 520, 521.

[2] Carpenter, who attended some séances with Alexis, noticed "how, whilst he was 'thinking aloud' (according to his friends) but 'fishing' or 'pumping' (according to unbelievers), he was helped by the information he gleaned from the unconscious promptings of his questioners." (*Mesmerism and Spiritualism*, etc., (1877), p. 77.)

[3] One of the best accounts of Ellen Dawson's clairvoyance is given in the *Zoist*, vol. iii. pp. 239–40. But unfortunately Miss Boyle, who tells the story, had taken her maid with her, and most of the facts given could conceivably have been derived from this source.

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direct or personal, and which I could not admit till such evidence came.

"One evening I dined at a house about a mile from my own—a house in which my wife had never been *at that time*. I left it at half-past ten, and was in my own house at a quarter to eleven. At my entrance my wife said to me, '*We have been after you*,' and told me that a little girl whom she mesmerised for epileptic fits (and who left her cured), and of whose clairvoyance she had told me other instances, had been desired in the mesmeric state to follow me to —— Street, to ——'s house. The thing took place at a few minutes after ten. On hearing the name of the street, the girl's mother said—

"'She will never find her way there. She has never been so far away from Camden Town.'

"The girl in a moment got there. 'Knock at the door,' said my wife. 'I cannot,' said the girl; 'we must go in at the gate.' (The house, a most unusual thing in London, stands *in* a garden; this my wife knew nothing of.) Having made the girl go in and knock at the door, or simulate, or whatever the people do, the girl said she heard voices upstairs, and being told to go up, exclaimed, 'What a comical house! there are three doors,' describing them thus.[1] (This was true, and is not usual in any but large houses.) On being told to go into the room from whence voices came, she said, 'Now I see Mr. de Morgan, but he has a nice coat on, and not the long coat he wears here; and he is talking to an old gentleman, and there is another old gentleman, and there are ladies.' This was a true description of the party, except that the other gentleman was not *old*. 'And now,' she said, 'there is a lady come to them, and is beginning to talk to Mr. de Morgan and the old gentleman, and Mr. de Morgan is pointing at you and the old gentleman is looking at me.' About the time indicated I happened to be talking with my host on the subject of Mesmerism, and having mentioned what my wife was doing, or said she was doing with the little girl, he said, 'Oh, my wife must hear this,' and called her, and she came up and joined us in the manner described. The girl then proceeded to describe the room: stated that there were two pianos in it. There was one, and an ornamental sideboard, not much unlike a pianoforte to the daughter of a poor charwoman. That there were two kinds of curtains, white and red, and curiously looped up (all true to the letter), and that there were wine and water and biscuits on the table. Now my wife, knowing that we had dined at half-past six, and thinking it impossible that anything but coffee could be on the table, said, 'You must mean coffee.' The girl persisted, 'Wine, water, and biscuits.' My wife, still persuaded that it must be coffee, tried in every way to lead her witness, and make her say

[1] A little diagram is given of these doors (she counted three, but indicated more) in the letter.—S. E. de M.

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coffee. But still the girl persisted, 'Wine, water, and biscuits,' which was literally true, it not being what people talk of under the name of a glass of wine and a biscuit, which means sandwiches, cake, etc., but strictly wine, water, and biscuits.

"Now all this taking place at twenty minutes after ten was told to me at a quarter to eleven. When I heard that I was to have such an account given I only said, 'Tell me all of it, and I will not say one word'; and I assure you that during the narration I took the most especial care not to utter *one syllable*. For instance, when the wine and water and biscuits came up, my wife, perfectly satisfied that it must have been coffee, told me how the girl persisted, and enlarged upon it as a failure, giving parallel instances of cases in which the clairvoyants had been right in all things but one. All this I heard without any interruption. Now that the things happened to me as I have described at twenty minutes after ten, and were described to me as above at a quarter to eleven, I could make oath. The curtains I ascertained next day, for I had not noticed them. When my wife came to see the room she instantly recognised a door, which she had forgotten in her narration.

"All this is no secret. You may tell whom you like, and give my name. What do you make of it? Will the never-failing doctrine of *coincidence* explain it? . . . .

"I have seen other things since, and heard many more; but this is my chief personal knowledge of the subject."

The letter is unfortunately not dated, but the events recorded are obviously of no very distant date. Mrs. de Morgan, the editor of the memoir, gives the year as 1849, and adds the following note:—

"I heard [*i.e.* from the entranced girl] all about the house and furniture, etc., *before* the girl told me what was going on. Mr. de Morgan has represented it to Mr. Heald as occurring *after*, and it is quite possible that I told him in this order. But I never heard of this letter until after his death.—S. E. de M."[1]

Cases such as that above recorded—and there are many similar accounts in the *Zoist* and elsewhere—can of course be explained, on the assumption that the record is correct, by the hypothesis that thoughts actually present to the mind of the sitter are telepathically conveyed to the subject. But there are many narratives which, taken at their face value, would force us to go beyond this explanation. It is not of course always possible to assure ourselves that the facts were written down at the time, and when this was not the case

[1] *Memoir of Augustus de Morgan*, by his wife, S. E. de Morgan, 1882, pp. 206–8.

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large allowance must no doubt be made for imaginative embellishments and suppression of erroneous details. The following narrative, however, by Professor Gregory, written in December, 1851, and relating to events which took place seven months previously, appears to have been based on contemporary records. Professor Gregory describes a visit paid by him to a friend in a town about thirty miles from Edinburgh. He there met a lady who had been twice mesmerised by his friend and exhibited considerable clairvoyant powers. At Gregory's request, this lady—who was personally unknown to him—began by giving him a minute description of his own house in Edinburgh, and then of his brother's house, near the same city, and his brother's occupation at the moment. The details given proved on inquiry to be correct. Gregory then continues:—

"I now asked her to go to Greenock, forty or fifty miles from where we were (Edinburgh was nearly thirty miles distant), and to visit my son, who resides there with a friend. She soon found him, and described him accurately, being much interested in the boy, whom she had never seen nor heard of. She saw him, she said, playing in a field outside of a small garden in which stood the cottage, at some distance from the town, on a rising ground. He was playing with a dog. I knew there was a dog, but had no idea of what kind, so I asked her. She said it was a large, but young Newfoundland, black, with one or two white spots. It was very fond of the boy and played with him. 'Oh,' she cried suddenly, 'it has jumped up and knocked off his cap.' She saw in the garden a gentleman reading a book and looking on. He was not old, but had white hair, while his eyebrows and whiskers were black. She took him for a clergyman, but said he was not of the Established Church, nor Episcopalian, but a Presbyterian dissenter. (He is, in fact, a clergyman of the highly respectable Cameronian body, who, as is well known, are Presbyterians, and adhere to the covenant.) Being asked to enter the cottage, she did so, and described the sitting-room. In the kitchen she saw a young maidservant preparing dinner, for which meal a leg of mutton was roasting at the fire, but not quite ready. She also saw another elderly female. On looking again for the boy, she saw him playing with the dog in front of the door, while the gentleman stood in the porch and looked on. Then she saw the boy run *upstairs* to the kitchen, which she observed with surprise was on the upper floor of the cottage (which it is), and receive something to eat from the servant, she thought a potato.

"I immediately wrote all these details down and sent them to the gentleman, whose answer assured me that all, down to the minutest, were exact, save that the boy did not get a potato but a small biscuit from the cook. The dog was what she described; it did knock off the boy's cap at the time and in the place mentioned;

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he himself was in the garden with a book looking on; there was a leg of mutton roasting and not quite ready; there was an elderly female in the kitchen at that time, although not of the household. Every one of which facts was entirely unknown to me, and could not, therefore, have been perceived by thought-reading, although, had they been so, as I have already stated, this would not have been a less wonderful, but only a different phenomenon.

"I shall send you another case for your next number. The above case I regard as a very satisfactory one, inasmuch as I did not know beforehand that I was to try any experiments at all, and had never seen the lady before.

"I remain, etc., etc.,

"*Dec.* 1851." "WILLIAM GREGORY.[1]

Many clairvoyants at this period were applied to, with success, to trace lost and stolen property. Several cases of the kind are recorded by Dr. Haddock of his subject, Emma, a young woman in his employment as a domestic servant. One case attracted considerable attention at the time. A sum of £650 sent by post to Messrs. Arrowsmith, of Bolton, had disappeared. Arrowsmith's cashier, Mr. Lomax, believed that he had paid in the sum to the bank, but the bank denied all knowledge of it, and a search which was made at Lomax's instance proved unsuccessful. In this dilemma Messrs. Arrowsmith and Lomax called on Dr. Haddock to consult his clairvoyant. On being given the envelope in which the money had been enclosed, she is reported to have described accurately the appearance of the missing papers—two banknotes and a bill of exchange—and the pocket-book in which Mr. Lomax had placed them on receipt. She further described how they were handed in at the bank counter, and finally said that she saw them in an envelope with other papers, in an inner room at the bank. In consequence of her statements Mr. Arrowsmith went to the bank and insisted on a further search; and the missing notes and bill were ultimately found amongst some old circulars, etc., on the mantelpiece in the manager's private room.[2] Of course, in this instance the clairvoyant may have merely reflected Mr. Lomax's own surmises as to the disposal of the money: and this explanation is no doubt still possible in the cases where a thief was indicated and stolen property recovered through the agency of clairvoyance. For despite the assurance to the contrary given by the persons who

[1] *Zoist*, vol. ix. pp. 423, 424.

[2] *Bolton Chronicle*, Sept. 8th, 1849. The account is reprinted in Haddock's *Somnolism and Psycheism*, pp. 117–24.

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consulted the clairvoyant, it is permissible to suppose that a latent suspicion in their minds may have inspired the sensitive's utterances. But the accurate and detailed description of the missing property itself, of the manner of the robbery, and of the personal appearance of the thief, alleged to have been given in two or three cases, is very remarkable.[1]

The instances given in this and the preceding chapter may be taken as favourable samples of the evidence for thought-transference and clairvoyance afforded by the writings of the English Mesmerists. Whilst, no doubt, insufficient in themselves to prove the existence of such faculties, it will perhaps be admitted that, in the light of more recent evidence to the same effect, it is difficult summarily to reject these records as the result of malobservation or inaccurate reporting.[2]

[1] See *Somnolism and Psycheism*, pp. 115–17. *Zoist*, vol. vii. 95–101, and vol. xiii. 56. In the last case the body of a drowned woman is alleged to have been traced by the clairvoyant.

[2] A striking instance of inaccurate reporting is furnished by Miss Martineau. In her *Letters on Mesmerism* she relates that a vague report had come on Sunday, October 13th, 1844, to the house at Tynemouth where she was then lodging, that the boat in which a cousin of her clairvoyant subject, Jane, was sailing had been wrecked. On the Tuesday evening no authentic news as to the fate of the sailors had, according to Miss Martineau, reached the house up till 8 p.m. At that hour a séance was held, and the entranced Jane gave the joyful news that all on board were saved, except one boy, and that the boat which rescued them was a foreign one. At the very hour, Miss Martineau adds, when this intelligence was being delivered in her sitting-room, the sailor's mother, who had come in after the commencement of the séance, and without the knowledge of Miss Martineau and her circle, was telling the same story in the kitchen, two floors below. In his *Illustrations of Modern Mesmerism* Forbes shows, on the evidence of a local doctor and of one of the witnesses at the séance, that the good news was actually known in the house three hours before the sitting. Miss Martineau's deafness may have accounted for the misunderstanding. In her *Autobiography* (edition of 1877, vol. ii. p. 198) Miss Martineau, referring to Forbes' action in the matter, states that she holds a legal declaration which "establishes the main fact on which the somnambule's story of shipwreck was attempted to be overthrown." But she gives no particulars, nor attempts to refute Dr. Forbes' exposure in detail.

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CHAPTER XI

ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS AND THE *UNIVERCŒLUM*

OF the mesmeric propaganda in America we have already caught a glimpse through the pages of the *Phreno-Magnet*.[1] Collyer, with his bowl of treacle, and Sunderland, with his hundred and fifty phrenological organs, seem to have fairly represented the movement. Though here and there we hear of medical men employing the mesmeric trance for therapeutic purposes, or for operations, there was in the decade 1840–50 no school of medical hypnotism as in France, Germany, and England; nor any organ at all comparable to the *Zoist* and the various Continental periodicals to which we have had occasion to refer. The phenomena of the somnambulic trance seem indeed to have become generally known in America at about the same time as in England, *i.e.* from 1838 onwards; but in the former country there was no convert of conspicuous ability and recognised standing in the scientific world to form a school, or win even such measure of recognition as fell to the share of Elliotson and his circle in England. The propaganda rested therefore mainly in the hands of popular lecturers and preachers; and the medical men who concerned themselves in the matter were not specially qualified either to investigate such a subject for themselves, or to impose their views on others. All the writers of the time believed, or had believed, in phrenology; though Collyer, as we have seen, had within a year or two recanted his views, and Sunderland was soon to repent him of his intemperance in cerebral geography. And, again with the exception of Sunderland, all seem to have believed in the transmission of a physical effluence from operator to subject as the cause of the trance and the more dubious phenomena associated

[1] See *ante*, pp. 129, 130.

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with it. Indeed, a large portion of the various treatises published at this time is devoted to vindicating the prior claim of their respective authors to the discovery of the true system of phrenology, and to inventing new names for the hypothetical effluence. Amongst these writers were several whom we shall meet with later in the history of Spiritualism. Thus the Rev. J. Bovee Dods, author of *Six Lectures on the Philosophy of Mesmerism*,[1] afterwards published his views on the séance manifestations, attributing the whole of them to the operation of "vital electricity."[2] Dr. J. S. Grimes, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the Castleton Medical College, by whom the subject of Mesmerism was afterwards introduced to the notice of A. J. Davis and his neighbours, explained the phenomena of the trance as due to the influence of a subtle fluid, for which he proposed the name *Etherium*, his conception of which is not distinguishable in some aspects from the modern conception of the ether. But Grimes' theory had some features peculiar to itself. He supposed that the motions in the *Etherium* which produced the trance, whether initiated by another organism or an inanimate object, always returned on themselves, like the galvanic current, in a closed circuit. Further, in his theory the trance and all that belonged to it were symptomatic of disease, resulting from disturbed equilibrium in the ethereal currents. He also assigned a large part in the production of the phenomena to the "credencive" faculty. The action of drugs at a distance and clairvoyance were ascribed to the direct influence—through the *Etherium*—of external objects on the imperfectly insulated nervous system of the sensitive. Grimes had invented a special system of phrenology, and a new name for the science of Mesmerism, to wit, *Etheropathy*.[3]

Dr. J. Rodes Buchanan, still living (in 1899)[4] to instruct and encourage a new generation of Spiritualists, had issued about 1843 a "Neurological" map, giving an entirely new distribution of the phrenological organs. But it was not until 1854 that he published a complete exposition of his system of Neurology, or Anthropology.[5] Beside the re-classification of the phrenological organs, his chief contribution to science was the theory of *Nervaura*, a subtle emanation given off from

[1] New York, 1847. [2] See chap. vi., book ii.

[3] *Etherology and the Phreno-Philosophy of Mesmerism and Magic Eloquence*, etc. Boston and London, 1850. Second edition; the first had been published some years previously. [4] He died in 1900.

[5] *Outlines of Lectures on the Neurological System of Anthropology, as discovered, demonstrated, and taught in 1841 and 1842.* Cincinnati, 1854.

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the nervous system, which differed not only for each individual, but for each organ. *Nervaura*, as Buchanan explained it, stood in the scale of materiality midway between electricity and caloric on the one hand and will and consciousness on the other, being indeed the mediating link between the two sets of entities. Like other mundane forces, it could be transmitted from one organism to another through an iron bar; but it was so far akin to the purely spiritual energies that by means of the *Nervaura* radiating from the anterior and superior cerebral centres "an individual operates upon a nation and transmits his influence through succeeding centuries."[1]

Buchanan also started in the early fifties a *Journal of Man*, which was originally, as we learn from Brittan, to have taken the place of the *Shekinah*,[2] but seems ultimately to have been devoted mainly to the exposition of the science of Neurology. Records of the Spiritualist movement, however, and the séance phenomena found hospitality in its columns, as is testified by the frequent references to it in other periodicals.

The one figure at this time which, by reason of superior common sense, stands out from the group of believers in phrenology and nerve-fluids was the Rev. Laroy Sunderland. Born in 1804, Sunderland became at the age of nineteen a revivalist preacher, and had the gratification of seeing his congregation profoundly affected by his first sermon: some prostrate and groaning on the floor, some smiting their breasts in an agony of grief, others crying aloud and clapping their hands in ecstatic joy.[3] He soon became an ardent Abolitionist,[4] and in 1835 started a paper called the *Watchman*, which ran until 1842. In 1839, however, he first had his attention called to the mesmeric trance; he made experiments for himself, succeeded in obtaining the usual phenomena, even to the extent of inducing anæsthesia for surgical operations,[5] and finally, in June, 1842, founded a periodical called the *Magnet*, in which he propounded a novel theory of the subject. We have already seen something of Sunderland's contributions to the science of Phreno-Mesmerism. It is fair to say, however, that he soon saw that he had been mistaken in attaching any weight to the phrenological demonstrations

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 194. [2] See *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii. p. 489.
[3] *The Trance and Correlative Phenomena*, by Laroy Sunderland (Chicago, 1868), p. 12. (The copy now before me was Sunderland's own.) The account which follows of Sunderland's life and work is taken, unless otherwise stated, from this book, or from the columns of the *Spiritual World* and *Spiritual Philosopher*. [4] See his *Anti-Slavery Manual*. New York, 1837.
[5] *The Trance*, pp. 137, 159, etc.

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on the heads of entranced persons. The whole subject of Phreno-Mesmerism is completely ignored in his paper the *Spiritual Philosopher* (1850–1), and in his work on *The Trance* (1868) he briefly owns his mistake.[1] So, in his theories of the trance he was misled at first by various physical analogies. He discoursed on the magnetic nature of living bodies and the polarity of the cerebral organs, and was disposed to explain somnambulism as a result of nervous induction.[2] But notwithstanding these earlier extravagances, Sunderland appears to have been one of the soundest and most cautious investigators of his time. He shares, indeed, with Braid the honour of having recognised in his later writings—and, it would seem, independently—that all the phenomena of the trance could be explained without fluid or aura or effluence of any kind, as being simply results of the subject's own mental reaction to suggestions supplied by the voice or gestures of the operator, or, in some cases, by the patient himself. When the suggestion came from without, it was an essential condition that a relation should have been previously established between operator and subject; but that relation he conceives as consisting in the subject's own anticipation or apprehension of certain results. This process Sunderland called *Pathetism*. In his work on *The Trance* he thus formulates the principle of Pathetism: "When a relation is once established between an operator (or any given substance, real or imaginary, as the agent) and his patient, corresponding changes may be induced in the nervous system of the latter (awake or entranced) by suggestions addressed to either of the external senses."[3] Throughout he seems to have been clear that the assumption of an effort of the will on the part of the operator being a necessary condition was, generally speaking, as gratuitous as the assumption of a fluid; and showed that, in many cases, the results followed, not on the will of the operator, but on the expectation of the patient. He allowed, however, that in rare instances, when a relation between operator and subject had been previously established, effects could be produced by mere volition on the part of the former. Agreeably to these views, he rejected as unproven and superfluous the magnetic and electric analogies commonly employed amongst his contemporaries to explain the vital phenomena; and frankly

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 52.
[2] See his early articles in the *Magnet*, quoted in the *Phreno-Magnet*, pp. 3, 166, 295.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 19; see also *Pathetism*, by the same author. Boston, 1847.

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intimated that Reichenbach's vaunted demonstrations were probably to be attributed to imagination alone.[1]

But the man in these early years who was destined to play the most important part in the future history of Spiritualism was Andrew Jackson Davis. The prophet of the New Dispensation was born in 1826, in a small rural township in the State of New York, and in 1838 moved with his parents to the town of Poughkeepsie, in the same State, from which place he takes his name as the "Poughkeepsie Seer." His father was part weaver and part shoemaker, and eked out his profits from those two trades by hiring himself out in the summer as a farm-labourer. Both parents appear to have been honest and respectable; but his father, according to the son's account, was shiftless and for many years given to drink. The young Andrew Jackson was apparently an undersized, delicate boy, with very little education, and in childhood of no conspicuous ability. In 1841 he was apprenticed to a shoemaker named Armstrong, and worked at that trade for about two years. In the autumn of 1843 considerable interest was aroused in Poughkeepsie by a series of lectures on Animal Magnetism delivered by Professor Grimes; and a tailor named Levingston succeeded in December of that year in entrancing young Davis. Thereafter, until August, 1845, Davis was constantly magnetised by Levingston, and practised under his guidance as a professional clairvoyant, giving tests, and especially prescribing for diseases. In March, 1844, according to the account given by himself, he wandered away into the country for a considerable distance under the guidance of his inward monitor, and fell into a spontaneous trance, during which Galen and Swedenborg appeared to him in a churchyard and instructed him concerning his mission to mankind.[2] In the following year, in the course of a professional tour, he made the acquaintance of Dr. Lyon, a physician then practising at Bridgeport, Conn., and of the Rev. William Fishbough. Later in the same year he appointed these two gentlemen to act as his magnetiser and his scribe respectively, and to assist him in the inditing of certain lectures on philosophy to be delivered in the clairvoyant trance.[3] The three accordingly took lodgings in New York, where Davis continued to practise as a medical clairvoyant,

[1] In an article in the *Spirit World* (vol. ii. p. 134) Sunderland gives a clear exposition of his views on Reichenbach's work.

[2] *Autobiography*, pp. 225–45.

[3] Davis had already published in the same year (1845), apparently before his falling in with Lyon and Fishbough, some *Lectures on Clairmativeness*. See footnote below, p. 167. This publication is not mentioned in the *Autobiography*.

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passing into the trance on the average twice daily. The lectures were actually commenced in November, 1845, extended over a period of fifteen months, and were published in the summer of 1847 in the shape of a large octavo volume of nearly eight hundred closely printed pages, under the title of *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and A Voice to Mankind.* The method of production was as follows: Davis, having been thrown into the trance state by Dr. Lyon, proceeded to dictate his discourse a few words at a time. Each utterance was repeated by Dr. Lyon, and only then written down by Fishbough. The scribe, in his introduction to the book, dated July, 1847, assures us that the whole book was written down exactly as dictated, the only alterations made, according to his explicit statement, being a few corrections in grammar and occasional removal of verbal redundancies or slight emendations to make the sense less obscure. It is obvious, however, that the peculiar process of dictation employed, by which the trance utterance was filtered through the minds of two educated persons before reaching the public, gave opportunity, not merely for correction of crudities of expression, but to some extent for the guidance of the argument. There seems no sufficient reason, however, to doubt the good faith of those concerned; and there were many witnesses, including some persons of note, who attended the lectures from time to time and countersigned the reports, so that it seems probable that the book as we have it is substantially in the form in which it was dictated by Davis.

Amongst those who had frequently attended the circle while the *Revelations* were being dictated, and who had taken a warm interest in the young seer, was the Rev. George Bush, of New York, Professor of Hebrew in the University and a well-known Swedenborgian. It was very largely to Bush's advertisement of the work that the favourable reception which the book met with on its first appearance was due. Bush vouched for the good faith of the author and his circle, and for the fact that the clairvoyant on more than one occasion had digressed from the main current of his discourse to answer impromptu questions put to him as tests; and he further gave a most enthusiastic account of the nature of the book itself. Thus he writes: "Taken as a whole, the work is a profound and elaborate discussion of the philosophy of the universe, and for grandeur of conception, soundness of principle, clearness of illustration, order of arrangement, and encyclopædic range of subjects, I know no work of any single mind that will bear

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away from it the palm." And, again: "The manner in the scientific department is always calm, dignified, and conciliatory, as if far more disposed to excuse than to censure the errors which it aims to correct; whilst the style is easy, flowing, chaste, appropriate, with a certain indescribable simplicity which operates like a charm on the reader."

The work was published in December of the same year (1847), in England, by John Chapman, who thought it necessary himself to write a Preface explanatory of the nature of the book, in which he quotes Bush's eulogy, and adds his own testimony, in a manner hardly less impressive, to the moral value and scientific insight of the book.[1] He found the philosophy of the *Revelations* was allied to the teachings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel; whilst the scientific conceptions therein advocated were confirmed by the views enunciated by Goethe, Oken, and the evolutionists generally, and by recent discoveries in astronomy. The aim of the work was exalted, and the style and thought alike impressive and dignified.

It is with a certain diffidence that one approaches the task of appraising a work of this character; it is no light matter to essay in the compass of a few pages to offer an adequate summary of the great Harmonial Philosophy, of which this book contains the germ, a philosophy for which its author has not found complete expression in some thirty volumes. But some account, at any rate of the contents of this book, must nevertheless be attempted. The book, as indicated in the triple division of the title, is divided into three parts; and it is on the second part, "Nature's Divine Revelations," that the indiscretion of the seer's admirers has caused attention to be chiefly concentrated. Bush speaks of it as "one of the most finished specimens of philosophical argument in the English language." It opens as follows:—

"In the beginning the Univercœlum was one boundless, undefinable, and unimaginable ocean of Liquid Fire! The most vigorous and ambitious imagination is not capable of forming an adequate conception of the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. There was one vast expanse of liquid substance. It was without bounds—inconceivable—and with qualities and essences incomprehensible. This was the original condition of Matter. It was without forms, for it was but *one* Form. It had not motions, but it was an eternity of Motion. It was without parts, for it was a Whole. Particles did not exist, but the Whole was as *one*

[1] *Brief outlines and Review of "The Principles of Nature,"* etc. London, John Chapman, 1847.

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Particle. There were not suns, but it was one Eternal Sun. It had no beginning, and it was without end. It had not length, for it was a Vortex of one Eternity. It had not circles, for it was one Infinite Circle. It had not disconnected power, but it was the very essence of all Power. Its inconceivable magnitude and constitution were such as not to develop forces, but Omnipotent Power.

"Matter and Power were existing as a Whole, inseparable. The *Matter* contained the substance to produce all suns, all worlds, and systems of worlds, throughout the immensity of Space. It contained the qualities to produce all things that are existing upon each of those worlds. The *Power* contained Wisdom and Goodness, Justice, Mercy, and Truth. It contained the original and essential Principle that is displayed throughout immensity of Space, controlling worlds and systems of worlds, and producing Motion, Life, Sensation, and Intelligence, to be impartially disseminated upon their surfaces as Ultimates."[1]

From these opening sentences the entranced clairvoyant traces the evolution of the universe—or, as he terms it, *Univercælum*—by a gradual process of differentiation into vast systems of suns, moving in concentric circles of inconceivable magnitude round the Great Eternal Centre, "pregnated with the immutable eternal essence of divine Positive Power." Thereafter, descending upon details, he gives a description of the particular solar system of which we are members, and of the gradual progression and development through the geological cycles of our own planet, ending up with a sketch of the first appearance and early history of the human race, and of its future in the spirit world.

His scientific competence for the stupendous task he essays may be judged from the following extracts. Here is an account of the first appearance of living organisms on the nascent planet:—

"Chemistry will unfold the fact that *light*, when confined in a certain condition and condensed, will produce *water*, and that water thus formed, subjected to the vertical influence of light, will produce, by its internal motion and further condensation, a gelatinous substance of the composition of the spirifer, the motion of which indicates animal life. This again being decomposed and subjected to evaporation, the precipitated particles which still remain will produce putrified matter similar to earth, which will produce the plant known as the *fucoides*. It is on the result of this experiment (the truth of which, as above represented, can be universally ascertained) that rests the probability, though not the absolute certainty,

[1] *Op. cit.* (thirty-fourth American edition, Boston, 1876), pp. 121, 122.

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of the truth of the description which I am about to give concerning the first form possessing life."[1]

Or take, again, this remarkable extract from a description of the marine fauna of the Old Red Sandstone period :—

"The radiata and articulata, in their progression, now begin to assume the form of the scarpion [*sic*] and insect, between which the fuci determined upon by geologists sustains an intermediate position. The seas at this time were inhabited by annelidans and scarpion fishes, the ultimate of which represents nearly the shark and sturgeon. The annelidans were a species of sea-worm, still to be found upon many coasts and coves, where stones and other bodies of concealment exist. Of this class there are two kinds —the white and red, the first of which is hermaphrodite, sustaining an intermediate position between the lower type and the higher, in which the serpula becomes visible."[2]

Or, again, this description of the Oolite :—

"No stratification has attracted so much attention among geologists as this. For it represents a formation as resulting from the decomposition of previously existing plants, animals, and mollusca, together with the deposition of solutions of existing substances upon the land and in the water; and the whole renders this stratification altogether mysterious and incomprehensible. It is known that lime in various proportions enters into this formation; but the cause has not as yet been discovered which could possibly unite the substances of the previous formations with the living substances of the earth, and render the whole an aggregated stratification. And by passing the substances of the various *oolite* beds through chemical processes, alumina and other substances will be discovered; not as naturally inherent ingredients, but as a condensation of the dissolved particles of previous formations."[3]

Again, he describes the ichthyosaurus as inhaling through "an adipose branchæ" an atmosphere which consisted of "carbon, nearly counterbalanced by oxygen";[4] he accounts for the occurrence of fossil shells high up on mountain sides as due to a general rise in the level of the ocean, "caused by the expansion of previously condensed particles composing the water";[5] amber he explains as formed out of sea-water "by a strange and peculiar chemical process."[6]

But his admirers claim that he anticipated Adams and Leverrier in the discovery of the planet Neptune; and it is certainly curious that in a lecture committed to MS. in

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 237. [2] Page 242. [3] Page 270.
[4] Page 263. [5] Pages 243, 244. [6] Page 312.

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March, 1846, he does give a fairly detailed description of an eighth planet.[1]

This is the first part of his account: "Its density is four-fifths of water. Its diameter it is unnecessary to determine. Its period of revolution can be inferred analogically from the period in which Uranus traverses its elliptic and almost inconceivable orbit. The atmosphere of the eighth planet is exceedingly rare, containing little oxygen, but being mostly composed of fluorine and nitrogen."[2] The first of these statements happens to be approximately correct, so far as modern science has succeeded in determining the matter; but as the figures quoted apply with equal accuracy to the density of Uranus, Neptune's nearest neighbour, the coincidence is not, perhaps, very remarkable. The last statement, it need hardly be said, is preposterous.

But if there are any who still think that Davis' description of an eighth planet is something more than a lucky shot, they will have to explain how it comes about that in his account of the planetoids he goes not a whit beyond the popular knowledge of his day. Four planetoids—Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta—were then commonly known.[3] Astronomers now reckon many hundreds. But Davis enumerates four only, and the account which he gives even of these is in some respects glaringly incorrect.

This second part of the book includes also a detailed description of the various planets of our system and their inhabitants, vegetable, bestial, and human. Towards the end he gives an account of the relations of man with the world of spirits, and a description of the six spirit spheres and their societies, and concludes with the following prophecy: "It is a truth that spirits commune with one another while one is in the body and the other in the higher spheres—and this, too, when the person in the body is unconscious of the influx, and hence cannot be convinced of the fact; and this truth will ere long present itself in the form of a living demonstration, and the world will hail with delight the ushering in of that era when the interiors of men will be opened, and the spiritual communion will be established such as is now being enjoyed by the inhabitants of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn."[4]

[1] The calculations of Leverrier were not verified by the actual discovery of the planet Neptune until September, 1846. [2] Page 167.

[3] A fifth, Astrea, had actually been discovered in the previous year (1845), but probably news of the discovery had not penetrated to Poughkeepsie.

[4] Pages 675, 676.

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The first part of the book, "Principles of Nature," contains an involved, wordy, and often unintelligible or self-contradictory exposition of a system of mystical philosophy, of which space will not permit even a brief analysis. But the leading notes are that the universe is one great whole; that "the Whole is a vast Machine operating unceasingly by an inherent principle of perpetual action"; that there is thus an eternal progression from lower to higher; that this progression moves on spiral lines; that matter and spirit differ as finer from coarser; that, the Universe being *one*, truth may best be attained deductively by mastering general principles; that it is, in fact, so learnt by the clairvoyant, who ascends in trance to the world of the Real; that there is a vast system of correspondences, or analogies, throughout the universe; and that things in general are arranged in series of three. Thus, to quote Davis' own illustration of correspondences, degrees, and series, in the human body we have the Head as the Cause, the Chest as the Effect, the Abdomen as the End or Ultimate. We have the mouth, the stomach, and the intestines as another series; or, again, we have saliva, gastric juice, and bile; or blood, lymph, and perspiration. So in the mineral world we find "interior, mediatorial, and exterior forms"; in industry, farmer, mechanic, and manufacturer. Whilst in the ideal State the legal, medical, and clerical professions "are a trinity forming one Whole, which corresponds to Wisdom."[1] With this key the secrets of the universe may be unlocked.

In the third part, "A Voice to Mankind," is set forth a rather crude Socialism, ending up with a scheme for the salvation of mankind by the organisation of society into phalanxes of Co-operators.

As regards Davis' attitude toward the Christian theology, it should be added that in the *Revelations* he goes through the books of the Old Testament—or, as he calls it, "the Primitive History"—seriatim, and endeavours to show that they have no title to exclusive or infallible inspiration; and of Christ he explicitly speaks, alike in this and in his later works, as a great moral reformer, but not in any special sense divine.

It is not easy to form a just appreciation of the book. The mistakes, indeed, where the nature of the subject admits of the statements being put to the test, are frequent, gross, and palpable, and many passages, as already shown, are pretentious nonsense. In its treatment of philosophical themes the style is for the most part wordy and diffuse, and the meaning

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 770.

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elusive beyond the tolerated usage of philosophers. But nevertheless, at its best, there is a certain stately rhythm and grandiloquence which partly explains the favourable impression produced on Bush, Chapman, and others. And whilst the book is obviously the work of an imperfectly educated man, its qualities are more remarkable than its defects. Viewed merely as an effort of memory, it is a stupendous work to have been produced by a man less than twenty-one years of age, whose few months of schooling had barely sufficed to impart the beggarly elements, and whose life had been mainly spent, since childhood, in working hard for his living. His later occupation as a professional clairvoyant no doubt gave him more leisure for study, but it is denied by those around him that he made use of his opportunities. His friends, indeed, not unnaturally gloried in the deficiencies of his education as tending to enhance the marvel of his trance utterances, and Davis himself protested that up to that time he had read only one book in his life, a romance apparently, called the *Three Spaniards*.[1] But the Rev. A. R. Bartlett, who knew him intimately from 1842 to 1845, *i.e.* in the three years immediately preceding the dictation of the *Revelations*, says that "he possessed an inquiring mind—loved books, especially controversial religious works, which he always preferred whenever he could borrow them and obtain leisure for their perusal. Hence he was indebted to his individual exertions for some creditable advances which he made in knowledge."[2] Davis, in his *Autobiography*, apparently referring to this passage, says that he borrowed the books from Mr. Bartlett in order to lend them to his friends, but had neither time nor inclination to read them himself.[3] Perhaps it is the clairvoyant's memory that is at fault, for it seems clear that he had read books prior to 1845, though not necessarily many books.[4] Indeed, it is perhaps more probable that he had read very few, and that their contents were the more readily stored up in a memory of enormous but undiscriminating retentiveness. Amongst these books, it may be surmised, was the *Vestiges of Creation*, or some similar work, containing in popular form an account of the nebular hypothesis and the main facts of the geological pro-

[1] *Autobiography* (*The Magic Staff*), pp. 186, 304, etc. New York, 1876, thirteenth edition.

[2] *Revelations*, Introduction, p. x.

[3] *Autobiography*, pp. 199, 200.

[4] Bush states (*Davis' Revelations Revealed*, p. 11) that Davis, writing to him from Poughkeepsie some time before the inception of the *Revelations*, quoted a passage from Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia*, giving the exact reference.

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gression,[1] and some English or Scotch geological text-book, possibly some book of Hugh Miller's, for the geology described is that of the British Isles.

The third part of his work, "The Voice to Mankind," was no doubt based on some book—perhaps Brisbane's *Social Destiny of Man*—advocating Fourier's views on Socialism, which just before the date of the *Revelations* had spread in the eastern States of America and had there excited extraordinary enthusiasm. Brisbane himself is mentioned amongst those who attended the delivery of the *Revelations*, and countersigned the reports.[2] The Fourierist newspaper, *The Phalanx*, was started in New York City in October, 1843; the great Convention of Associationists met in the same city in the following year; and most of the Socialist communities of that day, not only those which were originally founded on Fourierist lines, but semi-religious associations, such as Brook Farm, Hopedale, and Oneida, started in New York State, or in the States immediately adjoining. It is impossible that young Davis should have escaped the contagion of the time.

As regards the philosophy and theology, Professor Bush testifies that the *Revelations*, for the most part, accurately reflect Swedenborg's views; that the coincidence in the language in several cases is "all but absolutely verbal," and that in one instance Davis gives an accurate analysis of one of Swedenborg's scientific books, *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, a translation of which, published a year or two before in England, had recently made its appearance in America.[3] Bush founds an argument for Davis' supernatural power upon this analysis. The book, he says, had only recently been translated; very few copies (all consigned to one publisher) had reached America, and his inquiries had satisfied him that not one of these few copies had actually come into the hands of Davis or his circle. His inference is that Davis acquired the information clairvoyantly. Bush does not give details

[1] Davis, in his *Autobiography* (pp. 322, 323), says that during the progress of the lectures, owing to remarks being made on the similarity of his doctrines with those set forth in the *Vestiges* (published in 1844), he purchased and glanced at the book, but had not actually read more than a page at most. There is, of course, some resemblance in the general treatment of the facts. But I have compared several passages in the *Revelations* with corresponding passages in the *Vestiges*, and I cannot find any such detailed coincidences as to make it certain that Davis had actually borrowed from the earlier book. Indeed, it seems pretty clear, from his introduction of geological and astronomical terms and facts (*e.g. grauwacke* and the names of the planetoids), which are not apparently mentioned in the *Vestiges*, that he must, in any case, have had some other source of information.

[2] *Nature's Divine Revelations*, p. 2.

[3] Letters to the *New York Tribune*, Nov. 15th, 1846, and Aug. 10th, 1847.

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of his investigations, and it is obvious that it would be extremely difficult to offer satisfactory proof that Davis had not had access to this, or any other work of Swedenborg's. In the particular case referred to (pp. 587, 588 of the *Revelations*) the knowledge shown might conceivably have been derived from Bush himself, who, during his attendance on one of the lectures, may have discussed the book aloud with some friend. And, speaking generally, Davis' own statement that he had read no books on the subjects dealt with in his lectures, supported though it is by the testimony of Fishbough and others, is quite insufficient to override the enormous improbabilities involved. Moreover, we have the direct assertion of Bartlett, who was in a position to know, to set against that of Fishbough, whose knowledge was at best second-hand. And, lastly, Davis and his friends are not immaculate witnesses, for they are guilty of having deliberately suppressed all reference to an awkward fact, viz. the previous publication of some other lectures by the seer, which were not altogether in accordance with the later *Revelations*.[1]

It is unlikely, however, that there was any conscious plagiarism, and almost certain that there was rarely direct

[1] In 1845 there had been published in New York, under the title *Lectures on Clairmativeness*, a small pamphlet containing four lectures by Davis on the mysteries of human magnetism and electricity. In this pamphlet Davis writes of himself in the clairvoyant state:—

"I possess the power of extending my vision throughout all space, can see things past, present, and to come. I have now arrived at the highest degree of knowledge which the human mind is capable of acquiring . . . I am master of the general sciences, can speak all languages," etc., etc.

In this early work Davis had taught that salvation lay in the belief in Christ and His resurrection; whereas in the *Revelations*, as already said, he explicitly disavowed dogmatic Christianity. It must be presumed that Fishbough and the rest knew of the earlier work, and had felt the difficulty involved in the conflict between the earlier and the later utterances of the one infallible prophet. There appear, indeed, to have been also numerous minor discrepancies. At any rate, it is significant that neither in the sketch of Davis' life by Fishbough, which is prefixed to the *Revelations*, nor throughout the work itself, is there any mention of this earlier publication. Davis himself, in his *Autobiography* (p. 276), dismisses it in a single paragraph, in which he explains that the title was wrongly spelt and should have been *Clairlativeness*. Presumably there was at least one language, therefore, as well as one system of theology, of which his knowledge at that epoch was imperfect.

I have not been able to see a copy of *Clairmativeness*. It is not, so far as I can discover, included in Davis' collected works, and does not appear to have been reprinted. The foregoing account of it is based on Sunderland's review of it in *Pathetism* (1847). Mattison (*Spirit Rappings*, pp. 121, 122) suggests that Davis and his friends called in and destroyed the pamphlet. It is noteworthy that, in the Preface to volume i. of the *Great Harmonia*, Davis speaks of the *Divine Revelations* as his *first* work. It is fair to add that in volume iii. of the *Great Harmonia* (p. 210) he explicitly recants the assertion of infallibility quoted above from his earlier work, explaining that this belief in his own infallibility comes naturally to a clairvoyant.

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verbal reproduction of borrowed passages. In his later books and lectures, indeed, which purported to be produced under spiritual impression, but not in the trance, a few charges of wholesale verbal plagiarism have been substantiated against him. The most striking case of the kind is the parallelism of certain passages in the *Great Harmonia* (vol. iii., published in 1852) and in Sunderland's *Pathetism* (1847). That Davis should have deliberately copied those passages, half a page at a time, and that he should have chosen for the purpose a book written by a fellow-believer, which contained, moreover, a criticism on his own writings, and would certainly be familiar to many of those who read his own book, argues a want of foresight which is scarcely credible. It is probable that the real explanation is to be found in his possession of an extraordinarily retentive memory, such as is not infrequently associated with the somnambulic state. The same explanation no doubt applies to the other charges brought against him. But in the case of the *Revelations* I am not aware that, however obviously the ideas and the phraseology have been borrowed, any plagiarism of sentences or paragraphs, with the exception of the cases referred to by Bush, has ever been proved.[1]

But if all that Davis could offer was a garbled reproduction of books accessible to all, it is impossible to conceive that any public, however superficially educated, could have demanded thirty-four editions of his book in less than thirty years. Something the clairvoyant did no doubt contribute of his own to bind his gleanings into a golden sheaf. Despite pretentious ignorance, mistakes of grammar, fact, and logic, misty metaphysics, and second-hand Socialism, there is a certain imaginative quality in the work which gives it an independent value. What the clairvoyant poured out was not merely undigested fragments of other men's ideas; there is in the book a fairly consistent scheme of thought, the

[1] See Sunderland, *The Trance*, p. 104; and compare *The Great Harmonia*, vol. iii. pp. 92, 93, 96, 101, 102, 136 with *Pathetism*, pp. 74, 75, 105, 101, 102, 111. See also, for other cases, Mattison, *Spirit Rappings*, etc., pp. 121, 122, 126; Asa Mahan, *Modern Mysteries*, etc., p. 30. In *Human Nature* (London, 1868), vol. ii., p. 321, the authoress of *Primæval Man*, an "inspirational" work published in 1864, shows that Davis, in his *Arabula* (1867), had quoted several paragraphs from the earlier book with a few verbal alterations. Davis, writing to *Human Nature* later in the same year (p. 407), explains that he got perplexed in the proof-reading by various quotation marks which had been misplaced, and that he imagined himself in this passage to have summarised the views of the authoress, not to have made a direct quotation. He further excuses his mistake by pointing out that if he cannot claim the credit of the passage referred to, neither can his victim, since her book was admittedly "inspirational."

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guiding conception of which had in those days sufficient novelty and audacity for the English publisher to think it necessary to point out that the theory of organic evolution, though rejected by such men as Owen and Lyell, had found many distinguished advocates on the Continent.[1] Davis had, in fact, realised something of the orderly progression from the primæval firemist; something of the unity in complexity of the monstrous world; something, too, of the social needs of his time and of ours—the waste, the injustice, the manifold futilities and absurdities involved in the present stage of economic evolution. It was partly because he could appreciate the bigness of the ideas with which he dealt, and in a semi-articulate, barbarous fashion could make other people appreciate them too, that the *Revelations* had such an extraordinary and immediate success. Partly, too, the secret lay in the moral attitude of the author. The whole book is transfused by a vague enthusiasm—an enthusiasm not always according to knowledge—for the moral regeneration of mankind, like that which in England inspired the Owenite and later the Co-operative movement, which in America expressed itself in phalansteries, in religious revivals, and in abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, or meat, and which in both countries found perhaps its fullest expression for a few years in the movement known as Modern Spiritualism. And, indeed, it was the fulfilment—I had almost written the accidental fulfilment—a twelvemonth later, in the eyes of Davis and his followers, of the prophecy quoted above, of freer spirit-intercourse upon earth, that after all is mainly responsible for the fame achieved by the Great Harmonial Philosophy. The fulfilment was not, of course, "accidental." In the first place, the Spiritualism of the years subsequent to 1848 was not a different movement from the Spiritualism whose course we have been tracing prior to that year. It was characterised by the same ideas, but found other external manifestations. In the second place, there is no doubt that Davis and the little band who gathered round him helped materially to the fulfilment of this prophecy. It is conceivable that but for them and the movement they represented the Rochester knockings might have remained as barren of results as the Cock Lane ghost, or any other exploded Poltergeist.

We learn from Davis' *Autobiography* that during the fifteen months in which the *Revelations* were being dictated in New York, the three persons immediately concerned—Dr. Lyon, Fishbough, and Davis—were dependent mainly

[1] *Brief Outlines and Review*, etc.

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on the money earned by the latter by means of his clairvoyant prescriptions for disease. When this source of income proved insufficient, they were forced to borrow what was necessary for the publication of the book; the money being advanced by a middle-aged lady who shortly afterwards became the wife of A. J. Davis.

But when the book was published the Poughkeepsie seer found himself already famous; and his later life belongs to history.[1] The rumour of his séances and of the pending revelation had spread far, and the appearance of the book had been anxiously looked for in many quarters. A little band of reformers soon gathered round him, and it was resolved to publish a paper which should be the mouthpiece of the new philosophy.

The Rev. S. B. Brittan, a Universalist minister, was appointed the editor-in-chief of the new organ; and associated with him in the work of writing and editing were the Rev. W. Fishbough and the Rev. T. L. Harris, then twenty-four years of age, both of the same denomination; the Rev. W. M. Fernald, J. K. Ingalls, Dr. Chivers, Frances Green, and others.[2]

Harris had, in the early part of 1847, formally withdrawn from the Universalist Church, and later in the year went on a lecturing tour to spread the knowledge of the new Revela-

[1] So far, for our account of Davis' early life and circumstances, we have had to depend almost exclusively on his *Autobiography*, *The Magic Staff*, written some years later, and on the Preface to the *Revelations*, written by Fishbough, but founded largely on Davis' own statements. As we have already seen, the Preface omits all mention of one fact of cardinal importance in the clairvoyant's past life. Nor can the *Autobiography* be regarded as an entirely trustworthy authority, either for the inner life of the man or for his external relations. Few men can regard themselves and their work with the impartial eye of the historian. And when the subject of the *Autobiography* claims to be in receipt of information direct from the "Great Centre of intelligence, the positive sphere of thought, the Spiritual Sun of the Spiritual Sphere," it may be anticipated that the need for justifying these tremendous pretensions will take precedence over the claims of mere mundane happenings. The seer's descriptions of what he did and felt, how he acted towards his fellow-men, and what visions of spiritual things were vouchsafed to him, were, no doubt, written in good faith, but they should probably be read as representing primarily his own later conception of how it would have best become the dignity of the youthful prophet to have felt and done.

[2] In September, 1847, within a few weeks of the appearance of the *Revelations*, Professor Bush, who had hitherto been, as we have seen, one of Davis' most enthusiastic champions, published a small pamphlet, *Davis' Revelations Revealed*, in which he solemnly warned the public against being misled by the numerous errors, absurdities, and falsities contained in that work. Viewed in the light of Swedenborg's teachings, he declared, it was clear that Davis, although himself apparently an honest and single-hearted young man, had been made the mouthpiece of uninstructed and deceiving spirits. Further, he pointed out that Davis' pretended revelation was no isolated phenomenon; there were

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tion. He was known as the poet of the little circle; and from the outset there was some friction between him and Davis. Each, in fact, was possessed with a jealous vanity which could tolerate no rival pretensions. Early in 1848 there came a complete rupture between them, Fishbough taking the part of Davis and Brittan siding with Harris. The immediate cause of the rupture was a scandal in connection with Davis and the lady already mentioned. Whatever ground there may have been for the scandal—and it is by no means clear that Davis was in fault—the two were married in July, 1848; and a few weeks later a formal reconciliation took place between the Poet and the Prophet. But they never worked together again.

The first number of the *Univercœlum* appeared on December 4th, 1847. The prospectus set forth that "an interior and spiritual philosophy" was its basis; that it would devote special attention to pyschology, including dreams, somnambulism, clairvoyance, prophecy, trance, and kindred subjects; that it would be the organ for the communications made through A. J. Davis, who would begin by contributing a series of articles on physiology and medicine; and, generally, that "the establishment of a universal System of Truth, the Reform and Reorganisation of Society," were the ultimate objects contemplated. In his editorial article in the first number, Brittan thus expresses the central idea of the new philosophy:—

"The *Univercœlum* will, in its general tone and tendency, recognise the Great Supreme Intelligence as a Cause, Nature as the Effect, and the immortalized Human Spirit as the Ultimate Result, the three being united in the formation of one Grand Harmonious System. The Deity will be considered as an infinitely intelligent Essence, not existing separately from the Universe, but entering into and actuating and vivifying all things, from the most ponderous globe to the infinitesimal particle of matter. This Great Essence will be considered as an organized Being, possessing faculties corresponding to those of Man, only in an infinite degree—as constituting the Soul of which the material Universe is the Body. The Infinite Soul and Infinite Body are thus united in the same way as the finite soul and finite body are united in the formation of man; and

already many cases of the kind, "and, if we mistake not, the indications are rife of a general demonstration about to be made, or now being made, of the most pernicious delirium breaking forth from the world of spirits upon that of men" (p. 7).

The reason for this rapid change of tone was, no doubt, the change in the seer's attitude towards Christianity already referred to.

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hence, according to an ancient record, 'Man is created in God's own image.'

"This great intelligent Essence being the Soul of Nature, the Laws of Nature will be considered as the outward expression of the will or thoughts of that Soul, in the same way as the positions and movements of the human body are the expressions of the will or thoughts of the spirit within. . . ."[1]

Again, in the first article in this first number, "On the Necessity for new and higher Revelations, Inspirations, and forms of Truth, for the benefit of Mankind at the present day," Fernald points out the deficiencies of the last or Christian revelation. Christ stood indeed at the head of the human race, as its supreme moral exemplar; but His teaching furnished us with no new principles even of morality; much less did they provide an adequate philosophy of God, Nature, Immortality, and the Organisation of Society. It is on these subjects—as the slow progress of the world since Christ had shown—that light was chiefly needed; and the revelations of A. J. Davis were, the writer contended, the first instalment of the new inspiration which should supply the need.

This belief, that a new revelation was about to burst upon the world, seems to have been shared by all the men and women who wrote in the *Univercœlum*. Thus Fernald elsewhere, in an article on "The Pending Revelations,"[2] expresses his belief that the "Great day of final battle between the Demon of Darkness and the Angel of Light is near at hand." Warren Chase, in an enthusiastic article, "hails with joy the new philosophy as the positive sign of a good time coming. It shadows forth distinctly the approaching commencement of that condition of earth and man portrayed more or less vividly by Isaiah, Daniel, Jesus, the book of Revelation, and by Swedenborg and Fourier."[3] Another contributor, Mrs. Peabody, writing on "Communion with the Dead," asserts that "they (*sc.* the spirits of the dead) may be all round us without our discovering them, because our spiritual vision is not strong or clear enough," and that ultimately "the union of the two worlds may form as much a part of the consciousness of every disciple as it did of the Saviour Himself."[4]

It is to be noted that though the *Univercœlum* continued for more than a year after the outbreak of the Hydesville

[1] Vol. i. pp. 8, 9.
[2] Vol. iv. p 25.
[3] Vol. i. p. 343.
[4] Vol. ii. p. 177.

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rappings, its contributors appear to have been slow to recognise in them the fulfilment of their hopes. There is, so far as I can discover, but one allusion to the subject in its pages. In the third volume[1] there is a note on "Strange Manifestations," signed, "W. F." (Fernald). The writer, in his editorial capacity, explains that a correspondent has sent him an account of some singular manifestations taking place at Auburn. He promises to investigate the occurrences as soon as possible and lay the result before the readers of the *Univercœlum*. "We think, however," he continues, "that this is a question which should be put *to the torture* before any conclusions are definitely announced thereon," lest premature discussion of the matter should serve the cause of superstition and fanaticism.

The writers in the *Univercœlum* appear to have looked to a reconstruction of the economic organisation on Socialist lines as the first indispensable step towards the coming millennium. Thus one writes: "We are in earnest in the advocacy of general reforms and the reorganisation of society, because such is the natural counterpart and outer expression of the interior and spiritual principles which we are endeavouring to set forth." In conformity with this view, we find articles expounding the general principles of Socialism, much information about the building associations, the industrial associations, the trades unions, the protective unions, and other co-operative organisations which appear at this time to have been springing up all over the country; and occasionally vague hints of a grand scheme for realising the new social ideal in a community. One of the leading writers on this subject is Fernald, but we have also an article by Horace Greeley, on "Life—Ideal and Actual," and editorials on the same subject by J. K. Ingalls. Sunderland makes his appearance in a long letter, defending the claims of Pathetism. Davis contributes a series of articles on cholera, dyspepsia, etc., afterwards republished as volume i. of the *Great Harmonia;* whilst we learn from the advertising columns that Harris has become the pastor of the "First Independent Christian Society," and is conducting services in that capacity twice each Sunday. In one pronouncement of Harris' we find an indication of the rupture already referred to between himself and Davis. He issues a solemn warning against "a tendency on the part of certain minds to place implicit reliance on all statements which come from persons in states of mental Illumination: to make their words Authoritative; to receive

[1] Page 155.

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their sayings as Oracular and Infallible."[1] In view of the later career of the writer, this utterance is in itself a fine example of life's irony.

There are two cases recorded in the columns of the *Univercœlum* of revelations somewhat like those of Davis. The first case is published on the authority of a gentleman in Akron, Ohio. No names are given, but the editor professes himself satisfied of the good faith of his informant; and, indeed, the narrative bears the stamp of truth. The prophet, in this case a working mechanic, writing in November, 1847, gives an account of a spiritual experience which had befallen him in September, 1836, when he was eighteen years of age. He earnestly desired to become a preacher, and had gone to his pastor for instruction. The pastor had in the course of conversation asked him how he would prove, apart from the Bible, the existence of God. The question rankled; he took it home and pondered over it; it kept him awake at night and held him from attending properly to his work. Then, after a day or two, on the 16th September, 1836, the solution came.

"I went to my dinner with a troubled mind. My brain felt hot. I ate but sparingly. After dinner I strolled into the pasture back of the house, walking with my hat in my hand. The cool breeze fanned my brow. I wandered until the bell reminded me that it was one o'clock. I returned towards the shop; while on my way I stopped and sat down. I then and there began to doubt the existence of God, then the existence of matter, then of myself, of my power and ability to move, and at the same time attempted to move my hand and could not, and immediately mother appeared to me."

His mother (dead some time previously) then proceeded to instruct him on the nature of God, the world, man's soul, and other spiritual mysteries. At the end she said, "Now you have become convinced there is a God. You need no longer doubt your own existence. Move your fingers a little, and then you can get up. Remember what I have told you. Go in peace." When he returned to the shop it was almost night.

Two days later he wrote down the substance of his mother's teachings, and had kept it in his trunk until the autumn of 1847, when he first learnt of the similar revelations of A. J. Davis. This earlier trance utterance presents in brief the same general ideas as those found in *Nature's Divine*

[1] Vol. ii. p. 280.

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Revelations. We have the same pervading conception of evolution and development by law, the same condemnation of alcohol, tea, and tobacco, the same depreciation of the biblical records, and similar intimations of social reform. But there is nothing in the writing which is otherwise noteworthy, nor does it seem to be beyond the mental capacity of a serious and intelligent youth of little education.[1]

Of the other case we have fewer details. In connection with the approaching trial for insanity of one Pascal Smith, an account is given of the events which led to the preferment of the charge. In 1845, or thereabouts, J. T. Mahan, a youth employed upon an Ohio River steamboat, became a magnetic clairvoyant. At first he was employed in medical diagnosis by one Dr. Curtis, president of a medical college in Cincinnati. Later, however, being taken in hand by J. P. Cornell, of the same town, he "developed a wide sweep and wonderful clearness of mental vision," "and brought forth a system of physical and intellectual science" which is said to have been equal to that of A. J. Davis, and to have resembled it in general outlines. Thereafter Cornell, with other prominent citizens—Gilmore, Boucher Wattles, and others—dedicated their property—some 200,000 dollars, it is said—"each to the other and all to God," and formed a co-operative and agricultural association. They started a magazine for the furtherance of spiritual and social science, and purchased a large property on the Ohio River, to give the new community a local habitation. Unfortunately, the seer Mahan appears to have been influenced by self-seeking persons, and developed very extravagant tastes; financial disaster and exposure followed. No further account of the community is given in the *Univercœlum*, nor any details of Mahan's revelations.[2] From another source, however, we learn that the community —the Cincinnati Brotherhood—lasted for three years, 1845–8, and that the land and other property which they purchased on the banks of the Ohio in 1846 represented the salvage from an earlier community—the Clermont Phalanx—which had gone to pieces just before.[3]

To return to the *Univercœlum.* That paper had already in the first twelve months of its existence absorbed another kindred organ, the *Christian Rationalist*, and taken over its editor (Fernald) and subscribers. In 1849 more and more of its space was given up to chronicles of Socialist and co-operative movements; and finally, in July of that year, the *Uni-*

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 353, 369, 385. [2] Vol. i. p. 345.
[3] Noyes' *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 11, 374.

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vercælum gave place to *The Present Age*, under the editorship of W. M. Channing. The new organ, whilst still occasionally treating of animal magnetism, psychology, and clairvoyance, was primarily an organ of social reform, and the Poughkeepsie seer and his leading colleagues seem no longer to have been included amongst the contributors. Of them and their doings more will be told in the next book.

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BOOK II

EARLY AMERICAN SPIRITUALISM

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EARLY AMERICAN SPIRITUALISM

CHAPTER I

IN ARCADIA

IT was in Arcadia that the mysterious rappings were first heard. Arcadia is a township in Wayne County, New York; and in December, 1847, one John D. Fox, a farmer by occupation, a Methodist by religious conviction, entered on the tenancy of a house in Hydesville, a small village in that township. The household consisted, beside John D. Fox and his wife Margaret, of two unmarried daughters, Margaretta and Katie, aged fifteen and twelve years respectively. There was also a married son, David Fox, living about two miles from the parents' homestead, and a married daughter, Mrs. Fish, afterwards successively Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Underhill, living in Rochester, N.Y. The house itself, of which an illustration is given in Mrs. Underhill's book, *The Missing Link*, was built, as was usual in new settlements at that time, of wood, and consisted apparently of one floor only, with a cellar below, and a loft or garret above, the whole being little, if at all, bigger than a labourer's cottage in England.[1]

The former tenant, one Michael Weekman, who had resided in the house about eighteen months, is said to have heard from time to time loud knockings and other noises, for which he could find no apparent cause. His testimony, however, appears to have been given only after the raps which occurred during the Fox tenancy had made the whole subject notorious.[2]

[1] Capron (*Modern Spiritualism*, p. 33) describes it as a small framed building one and a half stories high.

[2] It is dated April 11th, 1848. See *Modern Spiritualism: its facts and fanaticisms*, by E. W. Capron. Boston, 1855.

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But it is matter of history that on the evening of the 31st of March, 1848, the Fox family, who, by their own account, had passed several disturbed nights previously by reason of the raps and other noises in the house, went to bed early, in order to make up their arrears of sleep. What follows is based upon the testimony of the Foxes. The girls were already in bed, and their parents—who occupied another bed in the same room—were about to follow, when the raps were again heard. On this occasion, in reply to a challenge given by one of the girls, the raps repeated, sound for sound, the noises which she made by snapping her fingers, and again and again gave the number of raps asked for. At this proof of an intelligent cause for the raps, Mrs. Fox, prescient that the matter was one of no ordinary moment, resolved to call in her friends and neighbours, that they also might bear witness. From the account given by one of those neighbours, William Duesler, written down on April 12th, 1848, the following extract is taken—

"The first I heard anything about them (the noises) was one week ago last Friday evening (31st day of March). Mrs. Redfield came over to my house to get my wife to go over to Mr. Fox's; Mrs. Redfield appeared to be very much agitated. My wife wanted I should go with them, and I accordingly went. When she told us what she wanted us to go over there for, I laughed at her, and ridiculed the idea that there was anything mysterious in it. I told her it was all nonsense, and that it could easily be accounted for. This was about nine o'clock in the evening. There were some twelve or fourteen persons there when I got there. Some were so frightened that they did not want to go into the room. I went into the room and sat down on the bed. Mrs. Fox asked questions, and I heard the rapping which they had spoken of distinctly. I felt the bedstead jar when the sound was produced.

"Mrs. Fox then asked if it would answer my questions if I asked any, and if so, rap. It then rapped three times. I then asked if it was an injured spirit, and it rapped. I asked if it had come to hurt anyone who was present, and it did not rap. I then reversed the question, and it rapped. I asked if I or my father had injured it (as we had formerly lived in the house), there was no noise. Upon asking the negative of these questions the rapping was heard. I then asked if Mr.—— (naming a person who had formerly lived in the house) had injured it, and if so, manifest it by rapping, and it made three knocks louder than common, and at the same time the bedstead jarred more than it had done before. I then inquired if it was murdered for money, and the knocking was heard. I then requested it to rap when I mentioned the sum of money for which it was murdered. I then asked if it was one hundred, two, three, or

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four, and when I came to five hundred the rapping was heard. All in the room said they heard it distinctly. I then asked the question if it was five hundred dollars, and the rapping was heard. . . . I then asked it to rap my age—the number of years of my age. It rapped thirty times. This is my age, and I do not think anyone about here knew my age except myself and family. I then told it to rap my wife's age, and it rapped thirty times, which is her exact age; several of us counted it at the time. I then asked it to rap A. W. Hyde's age, and it rapped thirty-two, which, he says, is his age; he was there at the time and counted it with the rest of us. Then Mrs. A. W. Hyde's age, and it rapped thirty-one, which, she said, was her age; she was also there at the time. I then continued to ask it to rap the age of different persons (naming them) in the room, and it did so correctly, as they all said.

"I then asked the number of children in the different families in the neighbourhood, and it told them correctly in the usual way, by rapping. Also the number of deaths that had taken place in the families, and it told correctly. I then asked it to rap its own age, and it rapped thirty-one times distinctly. I then asked it if it left a family, and it rapped. I asked it to rap the number of children it left, and it rapped five times; then the number of girls, and it rapped three; then the number of boys, and it rapped twice. Before this I had asked if it was a man, and it answered by rapping, it was; if it was a pedler, and it rapped."[1]

The affable intelligence proceeded by the same method to give further particulars of the murder; and even the initials—C. R.—of its first name and "sir name"; but refused on that occasion to gratify curiosity further.

On the two following days some hundreds of persons came to witness the marvel; and on the Sunday, again to quote from Mr. Duesler's account, the raps indicated, in reply to his questions, that the body of a man had been buried in the cellar. From the statement of David Fox, preserved for us by his sister, Mrs. Underhill,[2] we learn that in the early days of April, 1848, the Fox family and some of their neighbours, following the indications given by the spirit, dug in the cellar to the depth of about three feet, when they were stopped by water, without finding anything. Later, in July of the same year, when the water in the hole had gone down, the digging is said to have been resumed, a depth of several feet was reached, and some teeth, bones, and hair supposed to be human, and fragments of a broken bowl were discovered; a wooden board was also found, which apparently covered a

[1] *Explanation and History of the mysterious Communion with Spirits*, by E. W. Capron and H. D. Barron; 2nd ed., pp. 15, 16. Auburn, N.Y., 1850.
[2] *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, p. 18, etc. New York, 1885.

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hollow space. But the authority alike for the discovery and for the identification of the teeth and bones appears again to be the Fox family alone. The incident is not even mentioned in Capron and Barron's book (1850), and in Capron's *Modern Spiritualism* (1855) it is introduced with the preface, "It is not generally known that in the summer of 1848 Henry Beach and Lyman Granger, of Rochester, and David S. Fox and others . . ."[1] Again, some of the neighbours were found to recollect that, at a time vaguely described as "one winter," a pedlar had called in the village, had failed to redeem his promise to call next day, and had never more been seen; also that the earth in the cellar of the house afterwards inhabited by the Fox family had been observed at that time to be loose; also that another neighbour had seen in the kitchen of the house a figure resembling that of the pedlar.[2]

It should be added that Mrs. Fox had herself elicited most of the facts about the alleged pedlar before calling in the neighbours, and Mr. Duesler's catechism would therefore seem to have been dictated by her.[3] Further, no corroborative evidence of the supposed murder, or even of the existence of the man supposed to have been murdered, was ever obtained. Even Capron, the sympathetic historian of the movement, can only say that the (alleged) discovery of the (possibly) human teeth and bones affords "a shade of circumstantial evidence" for the story.[4]

Shortly after these incidents Margaretta Fox went to Rochester, N.Y., to stay with her married sister, then known as Mrs. Fish, and Catherine visited another neighbouring town, Auburn. In both these places the raps broke out with renewed vigour. Mrs. Fish herself and many other persons in Rochester became mediums for the mysterious sounds, and the like result followed with several inmates of the boarding-house in Auburn where the younger sister stayed.[5] Sometimes the contagion was conveyed by a casual visit. Thus Miss Harriet Bebee, a young lady of sixteen, had an interview of a few hours with Mrs. Tamlin, a medium of Auburn, and on her return to her own home twenty miles distant the raps forthwith broke out in her presence.[6] In the course of the next two or three years, indeed, the rappings had spread throughout the greater part of the eastern States.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 53.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33, quoted from a pamphlet published in 1850 by one Lewis.
[3] Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[4] *Modern Spiritualism*, p. 54. Mrs. Hardinge Britten (*History of Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 37) writes to the same effect.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 40. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

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Thus a writer in the *New Haven Journal* in October, 1850, refers to knockings and other phenomena in seven different families in Bridgeport, forty families in Rochester, in Auburn, in Syracuse, "some two hundred" in Ohio, in New Jersey, and places more distant, as well as in Hartford, Springfield, Charlestown, etc.[1]

A year later a correspondent of the *Spiritual World* estimated that there were a hundred mediums in New York City,[2] and fifty or sixty "private circles" are reported in Philadelphia.

The Fox family—the mother and her three daughters—practised no unwise parsimony of their spiritual gifts. In the course of the years 1849 and 1850 they appear to have given demonstrations of their power in several large towns before considerable audiences. Their claims to supernormal power did not, of course, escape challenge. Again and again committees were appointed to examine the subject and report.[3] But for some time the source of the rappings remained inexplicable. Horace Greeley, for instance, writes in his organ, the *New York Tribune*, in August, 1850, as follows:—

"Mrs. Fox and her three daughters left our city yesterday on their return to Rochester, after a stay here of some weeks, during which they have freely subjected the mysterious influence by which they seem to be accompanied to every reasonable test, and to the keen and critical scrutiny of the hundreds who have chosen to visit them, or whom they have been invited to visit. The rooms which they occupied at the hotel have been repeatedly searched and scrutinised; they have been taken without an hour's notice into houses they had never before entered. They have been all unconsciously placed on a glass surface concealed under the carpet, in order to interrupt electric vibrations; they have been disrobed by a committee of ladies appointed without notice, and insisting that neither of them should leave the room until the investigation had been made, etc., etc., yet we believe no one to this moment pretends that he has detected either of them in producing or causing the Rappings; nor do we think any of their contemners has invented a plausible theory to account for the production of these sounds, nor the singular intelligence which (certainly at times) has seemed to be manifested through them. . . . Whatever may be the origin or the cause of the 'Rappings,' the ladies in whose presence they occur do not make them. We tested this thoroughly and to our entire satisfaction."[4]

[1] Quoted in the *Spiritual Philosopher* (1850), vol. i. p. 99.
[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 151.
[3] Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–48.
[4] Quoted in the *Spiritual Philosopher*, vol. i. p. 39.

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But early in the following year an explanation was furnished. In the middle of December, 1850, the Fox girls came to Buffalo, N.Y., and stayed there for some weeks, giving public exhibitions of their marvellous powers. Among those who visited them were three doctors—Flint, Lee, and Coventry, Professors at the University of Buffalo. On the 17th February, 1851, these gentlemen wrote a joint letter to a local newspaper—the *Commercial Advertiser*—pointing out that the rappings could be explained by movements of the knee-joints, and stating that a lady of their acquaintance had actually produced similar sounds by that means. Mrs. Fish at once challenged the doctors to prove the truth of their theory at a personal interview, a challenge which the three doctors accepted. The following is their report of what took place:—

"DETECTION OF THE FOX GIRLS.

"The invitation thus proposed was accepted by those to whom it was addressed, and on the following evening, by appointment, the examination took place. After a short delay, the two Rochester females being seated on a sofa, the knockings commenced, and were continued for some time in loud tones and rapid succession. The 'spirits' were then asked whether they would manifest themselves during the sitting and respond to interrogatories. A series of *raps* followed, which were interpreted into a reply in the affirmative. The two females were then seated upon two chairs placed near together, their heels resting on cushions, their lower limbs extended, with the toes elevated, and the feet separated from each other. The object in this experiment was to secure a position in which the ligaments of the knee-joint should be made tense, and no opportunity offered to make pressure with the foot. We were pretty well satisfied that the displacement of the bones requisite for the sounds could not be effected unless a fulcrum were obtained by resting one foot upon the other, or on some resisting body. The company, seated in a semicircle, quietly waited for the '*manifestations*' for more than half an hour, but the 'spirits,' generally so noisy, were now dumb. . . . On resuming the usual position on the sofa, the feet resting on the floor, *knockings* very soon began to be heard. It was then suggested that some other experiment be made. This was assented to, notwithstanding the first was, in our minds, amply conclusive. The experiment selected was, that the knees of the two females should be firmly grasped, with the hands so applied that any lateral movement of the bones would be perceptible to the touch. The pressure was made through the dress. It was not expected to prevent the sounds, but to ascertain if they proceeded from the knee-joint. It is obvious that this experiment was necessarily far less demonstrative to an

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observer than the first, because if the bones were distinctly felt to move the only evidence of this fact would be the testimony of those whose hands were in contact with them. The hands were kept in apposition for several minutes at a time, and the experiment repeated frequently for the course of an hour or more with negative results; that is to say, there were plenty of *raps* when the knees were not held and none when the hands were applied save once. As the pressure was intentionally somewhat relaxed (Dr. Lee being the holder), two or three faint, single *raps* were heard, and Dr. Lee immediately averred that the motion of the bone was plainly perceptible to him. The experiment of seizing the knees as quickly as possible when the knockings first commenced was tried several times, but always with the effect of putting an immediate *quietus* upon the *manifestations*. . . . The conclusion seemed clear that the *Rochester knockings* emanate from the knee-joint. Since the exposition was published we have heard of several cases in which movements of the bones entering into other articulations are produced by muscular effort, giving rise to sounds. We have heard of a person who can develop knockings from the ankle, of several who can produce noises with the joints of the toes and fingers, of one who can render loudly audible the shoulder, and another the hip-joint. We have also heard of two additional cases in which sounds are produced by the knee-joint."

In a letter dated the 21st of February Dr. Lee, one of the three signatories, explained that the movement, or partial dislocation of the knee-joint, probably consisted in "the movement of the *tibia* outward, partly occasioned, I believe, by pressure on the foot, there being great relaxation of the ligaments about the knee-joint, but chiefly by the action of the muscles of the leg below the knee." The ability to produce sharp raps by "cracking" the smaller joints is, of course, not uncommon. Newman Noggs was a "medium" of this kind. One Chauncey Burr earned some fame at this time by giving lectures on Spiritualism, in which he demonstrated that the raps could be produced by the toe-joints.

A few weeks after the report of the Buffalo physicians a connection by marriage of the Fox family, Mrs. Norman Culver, stated that Margaretta Fox had confessed to her how the raps were produced. Mrs. Culver's statement, duly written out on the 17th April, 1851, and attested by two witnesses, a doctor and a clergyman, was published in the *New York Herald*. The chief points in the deposition are that Mrs. Culver had for two years believed in the raps as genuine, but recently, noting some suspicious circumstances, she had offered to Catherine to assist her. Catherine—

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Margaretta being absent—had gladly accepted the offer, and explained that the raps were produced by the knees and toes, but chiefly by the latter. Some practice was required, and if the feet were thoroughly warmed the raps would come more readily. Mrs. Culver tried, and became fairly adept. She continues:—

"Catherine told me how to manage to answer the questions. She said it was generally easy enough to answer right if the one who asked the questions called the alphabet. She said the reason why they asked people to write down several names on paper, and then point to them till the spirit rapped at the right one, was to give them a chance to watch the countenance and motions of the person, and that in that way they could nearly always guess right. She also explained how they held down and moved tables. (Mrs. Culver gave us some illustrations of the tricks.) She told me that all I should have to do to make the raps heard on the table would be to put my foot on the bottom of the table when I rapped, and that when I wished to make the raps sound distant on the wall, I must make them louder, and direct my own eyes earnestly to the spot where I wished them to be heard. She said if I could put my foot against the bottom of the door the raps would be heard on the top of the door. Catherine told me that when the committee held their ankles in Rochester, the Dutch servant girl rapped with her knuckles under the floor from the cellar. The girl was instructed to rap whenever she heard their voices calling the spirits. Catherine also showed me how they made the sounds of sawing and planing boards. (The whole trick was explained to us.) When I was at Rochester last January Margaretta told me that when people insisted on seeing her feet and toes she could produce a few raps with her knee and ankle."

Mrs. Culver adds that she learnt from Catherine that Elizabeth Fish (Mrs. Fish's daughter) accidentally discovered how to make the raps, by playing with her toes against the footboard when in bed. Many naughty little girls before and since appear to have made the same discovery.

Mrs. Culver's statement, though it fits in with the Buffalo demonstration, may not be thought conclusive in itself. But it receives indirect confirmation from the fact that the apologists for Spiritualism could find nothing worse to say of it, or of Mrs. Culver herself, than that the statement about the part played by the Dutch servant girl at the Rochester investigations was obviously incorrect, because at the Rochester investigation of November, 1849, the meetings were not held at the Foxes' house at all, but at the houses of members of the committee, or in a public hall; that the Foxes at that

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time could not afford to keep a servant girl, and further, that Catherine herself was not present at these meetings. It is obvious that, independently of the fact that there may have been more than one investigation by a committee at Rochester, inaccuracies of this kind in reporting facts at second hand are quite compatible with honesty on the part of the reporter.[1]

These exposures seem, however, to have done little to check the progress of the movement. Apart from the general eagerness to believe the marvellous, there were three special reasons for their ineffectiveness. In the first place, the Buffalo doctors did not claim, except in one instance, actually to have demonstrated that the knocks were produced by the knee-joints or toe-joints; they had at best only shown that appearances were consistent with their being so produced. The faithful were not slow to take advantage of this loophole. But if any reader should now be disposed to question the sufficiency of the explanation put forward by the Buffalo doctors, he should note that, in the first place, no pains have ever been taken by the Spiritualists themselves to disprove the Buffalo demonstrations. Of course, conclusive experiments in such a case are not easy to devise, because of the extreme difficulty of locating with approximate accuracy the source of a sound. But it is precisely on that account that we are not justified in attaching weight to loose and vaguely worded statements made by irresponsible observers, so little qualified for their task that they have not even recognised this initial difficulty. It is frequently reported that the sounds proceeded from quite a different direction from the medium; that they were heard to come from the door, the walls, the ceiling; or generally that they were heard in such circumstances that it was physically impossible for the medium to have produced them. If in place of these general statements—with which the diligent student may fill his note-books, if it so please him—we could find in the whole literature of Spiritualism but one case, in which, in the presence of competent observers, and under conditions well ascertained and fully described, the raps were actually heard, when there was good cause for believing it impossible for any person present to have made them, we should no doubt do well to suspend our judgment, at any rate, as regards that one case. In default of such evidence the later confessions of the two younger Fox sisters, though not, of course, conclusive, are at least pertinent. In

[1] See letters by Capron in the *New York Express*, reprinted in *The Spirit World*, vol. iii. pp. 18, 93, and *Modern American Spiritualism*, by Emma Hardinge (Mrs. Hardinge Britten), London (Burns), no date, p. 70.

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the autumn of 1888 Mrs. Kane (Margaretta Fox) and Mrs. Jencken (Catherine Fox) made public, and apparently spontaneous, confession, that the raps had been produced by fraudulent means. Mrs. Kane even gave demonstrations before large audiences of the actual manner in which the toe-joints had been used at the early séances. Mrs. Jencken, at any rate, if not also Mrs. Kane, afterwards recanted her confession.[1]

Several confessions of the kind were, however, made at the time. Thus in October, 1851, a girl of thirteen, named Almira Bezely, was tried on the charge of murdering her infant brother. Almira had apparently been a rapping medium for some months, and had herself through the rappings predicted the baby's death. At the trial her father and sister testified that, after her arrest on her own confession of murder, Almira explained that she had made the rappings with her feet, and showed them how it was done.[2] Again, in the pamphlet, *Knocks for the Knockings*, published by the Brothers Burr, in 1851, there is quoted an affidavit, duly attested before a justice of the peace, by one Lemuel J. Beardslee, who states therein that he was a rapping medium for about three months, and that he produced the sounds voluntarily by his toes and shoes, and gave answers to mental questions by carefully watching the questioner's countenance, and noting hints involuntarily given.[3] Again, a cabinet-maker named Hiram Pack, of 488, Pearl Street, New York, gave to Mr. Mattison a written statement to the effect that he had made to order two "medium" tables, which had machinery for rapping concealed in the bed of the table, operated by wires carried down the legs.[4] But it may be surmised that the demands of the credulous could generally be satisfied by less elaborate apparatus.

[1] See *The Death-blow to Spiritualism*, by R. B. Davenport (New York, 1888); also *New York Herald* of 24th September and 10th October, 1888; *Light* for November and December, 1888; and *Journal S. P. R.*, December, 1888.

[2] Quoted, from a contemporary account of the trial given in the *Providence Journal*, October 23rd, 1851, in *Spirit Rapping Unveiled*, p. 172, by the Rev. H. Mattison (New York, 1853). Other persons, it should be noted, gave evidence to the effect that they had heard the rappings and did not believe that Almira had caused them. Amongst the grounds given for this belief, persisted in in spite of the culprit's confession, were that it was not possible for Almira to have made the raps; that she had been watched closely, and no trickery had been detected; and that the answers given by the raps alluded to facts not within Almira's knowledge.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 174. Mr. Maskelyne (*Pall Mall Gazette*, April 18th, 1885) states that some thirty years previously he had been asked to repair a little apparatus for a spirit rapper, and that from its construction he inferred that the apparatus was fastened under the flounces of a dress, and used for producing raps.

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It seems clear, in the second place, that the Buffalo demonstration fell short, in that it failed to give a complete explanation of the case. It is probable that the raps were produced by various methods; and that where the conditions rendered one device impracticable, another was employed. He would be a poor conjurer who could not employ a variety of means to produce his effects. The Rev. Eli Noyes, indeed, claimed to have produced raps in four different ways, and to have succeeded in deceiving the whole company; while Mr. Chauncey Burr boasted his acquaintance with no less than seventeen methods;[1] and the descriptions given by various Spiritualist witnesses point strongly to a diversity of origin for the mysterious sounds. Mr. W. Duesler describes the sounds as raps or knocks which jarred the bedstead, and one particular rap—louder than common—sounded like the falling of a heavy stick on the wooden floor above their heads.[2] One of the editors of the *Excelsior* (New York) says that the raps varied "from a light, clear, metallic sound to a dull, muffled one, like a rap with the knuckles upon a partition covered with cloth."[3] A witness in the *Spirit World*[4] speaks of "a clear, distinct sound . . . nearly resembling the spark of transmitted electricity, only softer and muffled." Spicer[5] says that the prevailing rap is like the sound made by a pheasant confined in a strong wooden box and pecking vigorously to get out; or again, like a blow on the table with the knuckles. Fishbough describes the sounds as "characterised by a kind of vibrating sepulchral rumble";[6] whilst De Morgan, some years later, writes that the raps occurring in the presence of Mrs. Hayden were "clean, clear, faint sounds such as would be said to *ring* had they lasted. I likened them at the time to the noise which the ends of knitting needles would make if dropped from a distance upon a marble slab and instantly checked by a damper of some kind."[7]

From such varying descriptions as this it may be inferred, on the one hand, that the Buffalo doctors had not furnished a complete explanation of the mystery; and on the other, that the claim repeatedly put forward by the early Spiritualists, that the sound of the raps was unique and inimitable, and once heard could never fail to be distinguished

[1] From Burr's pamphlet, *Knocks for the Knockings*, quoted in *Spirit Rapping Unveiled*, p. 176. [2] Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[3] Quoted in *History of the Strange Sounds*, etc., by D. M. Dewey, p. 52. Rochester, 1850. [4] Vol. ii. p. 99.
[5] *Sights and Sounds*, pp. 210, 230. [6] *Ibid.*, p. 392.
[7] *From Matter to Spirit*, p. xli.

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from all other sounds, must be accepted with some qualification.[1]

But there was a weightier argument which helped to discount the effects of the Buffalo exposure, and no doubt gave the rapping mediums a longer lease of popularity. The theory of simple fraud did not explain how it came about that the raps could correctly reply to questions of which the questioner alone knew the answer, or even to mental questions. Nothing is more striking in the early history of spirit-rapping than the numerous accounts of correct information being given in answer to the questions of persons who were complete strangers to the medium. Nor does the testimony to this portent proceed only from the Spiritualists. The Rev. Asa Mahan, First President of Cleveland University, who wrote a book to denounce the errors of the Spiritualists and to prove that spirits had no part in the matter, gave many instances of the kind resting upon credible testimony; and is driven—or perhaps I should rather say hastens—to conclude that the rappers possessed the power, by odylic force, of reading the thoughts of those who consulted them.[2] It was this circumstance which most impressed the early investigators in this country who attended Mrs. Hayden's séances; and apparently went far to convince so astute an observer as the late Professor De Morgan.[3] When we read —as we frequently do in the literature of the time—that the spirits rapped out names of friends dead many years before, and correctly answered all kinds of test questions, to the number sometimes of fifty at a time, expressly prepared for their confusion, we feel that those early Spiritualists had perhaps some justification for the faith that was in them. But in fact the explanation was in most cases an extremely simple one; and there can be no reasonable doubt that Mrs. Culver and Lemuel Beardslee have correctly indicated it in their depositions.

The approved method of consulting the oracle at the early séances was for the questioner to repeat a number of possible answers to his question, until a rap indicated the correct one.

[1] See, for instance, Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 41, "The sounds have never been imitated, nor do we believe they can be." Judge Edmonds, however, whose experience in such matters was very wide, and whose judgment was probably sounder than that of most of his contemporaries, frankly admits that he had never heard a sound which he could not imitate; and that he had known mediums deliberately to counterfeit the raps. (*Letters on Spiritualism*, Memorial Edition, p. 180. London: James Burns, 1874.)

[2] *Modern Mysteries Explained and Exposed.* Boston, 1855.

[3] See his account of a séance with Mrs. Hayden in the early fifties, quoted in Book III. chap. i.

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The following is extracted from an account of a séance famous in the annals of Spiritualism, which was drawn up by Mr. Ripley and published early in 1850 in the *New York Tribune*.[1] At this meeting the "Rochester ladies" were the mediums, and J. Fenimore Cooper, William Cullen Bryant, N. P. Willis, General Lyman and others were amongst the consultants. After various communications had been given—

"Mr. J. Fenimore Cooper was then requested to enter into the supra-mundane sphere, and proceeded to interrogate the spirits with the most imperturbable self-possession and deliberation. After several desultory questions to which no satisfactory answers were obtained, Mr. C. commenced a new series of inquiries. 'Is the person I inquire about a relative?' *Yes* was at once indicated by the knocks. 'A near relative?' *Yes*. 'A man?' *No answer*. 'A woman?' *Yes*. 'A daughter? a mother? a wife?' *No answer*. 'A sister?' *Yes*. Mr. C. then asked the number of years since her death. *To this the answer was given in rapid but distinct raps, some counting 45, others 49, 54, etc. After considerable parleying as to the manner in which the question should be answered, the consent of the invisible interlocutor was given to rap the years so slowly that they might be distinctly counted. This was done. Knock, knock, knock, for what seemed over a minute, till the number amounted to 50, and was unanimously announced by the company.* Mr. Cooper now asked, 'Did she die of consumption?' naming several diseases, to which no answer was given. 'Did she die by accident?' *Yes*. 'Was she killed by lightning? Was she shot? Was she lost at sea? Did she fall from a carriage? Was she thrown from a horse?' *Yes*. Mr. Cooper did not pursue his inquiries any further, and stated to the company that the answers were correct, the person alluded to by him being a sister, who, just fifty years ago the present month, was killed by being thrown from a horse."

As an illustration of the unconscious improvement of evidence by Spiritualist writers, it may be noted that Capron, in giving an account of this séance, substitutes for the passage italicised in the foregoing extract the single sentence, "50 knocks were given, and the number unanimously so announced by the company."[2]

It will be seen that the procedure allowed the medium to gain indications from the manner, the tone of voice, or the hesitancy as to the answer expected. Moreover, she gave herself, as a practised conjurer should, more than one chance. If the answer given proved incorrect, it could always be

[1] Quoted from Spicer, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76. See also *History of Modern Spiritualism*, by Emma Hardinge, pp. 64–66.

[2] *Modern Spiritualism*, p. 174.

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suggested that the raps had been miscounted or attached to the wrong letters. At the early séances, indeed, if the alphabet was used at all, it was customary for the medium herself to point to the letters, as it was found that the communication was facilitated by this means. And this practice still continued so long as the questions related to general topics, or when spirits like Channing, Swedenborg, or Franklin held the floor. But when a sitter desired a more conclusive test, and especially when he desired to receive a communication from a deceased friend, or an answer to a mental question, the printed alphabet would be placed in his own hands, and he would be requested to move his pencil slowly down it, allowing a short pause after each letter until a rap came. The letter indicated by the rap was then noted down, and the process recommenced. Precisely as in the muscle-reading experiments with which Cumberland and Irving Bishop made us familiar some years ago, the questioner was invited to concentrate his attention on the question asked; and as the tedious process was usually performed in full view of the medium, it is obvious that she had the benefit of any unconscious indications of preference or expectation given by the sitter. Mahan observes with pride that some of his friends, who were possessed of great strength of will and unusual powers of intellectual concentration, were extraordinarily successful in obtaining answers to 'test questions.' In one case this strength of will manifested itself in "loud and emphatic pointing and sticking at particular letters"; and the recorder explains that, had he not known better, he should certainly have come to the conclusion that this emphatic pointing gave the medium the desired cue.[1] It may be added that it frequently happened, if the original propounder of a set of mental questions failed to receive satisfactory answers, that he would be requested to hand his written questions to a more sympathetic sitter, who had been already proved to be in *rapport* with the spirit. The answers, we are told, would then be elicited without difficulty.[2]

The results attained by this method were certainly very remarkable. But shrewder observers, even of those who believed in the phenomena in general as being of supra-

[1] Asa Mahan, *op. cit.*, p. 221. See also other cases recorded in that book. Mattison, *Spirit Rapping Unveiled*, p. 57; Spicer, *Sights and Sounds*, and the early literature, *passim*.

[2] Joel Tiffany, *Spiritualism Explained*, p. 123. Tiffany admits that the "spirits" often contented themselves with reading the sitter's thoughts.

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mundane origin, soon saw that the hypothesis of spirit-agency in this particular manifestation was at least sometimes superfluous. A gentleman of Baltimore, for instance, writes to Spicer, in August, 1852:—[1]

"For example, I will give you an instance in which my friend the Colonel (*i.e.* the spirit-Colonel communicating through the raps) manifestly to my mind followed the course of my own mental perceptions. I noticed that when I asked what I already knew the answer came more promptly than when such was not the case. In these questions I *expected* the answer; in fact, designed the questions to draw certain ones only. The Colonel spelt my names correctly, using an initial only for the middle one. I then asked him for the middle name, as that was my military name. He spelt it promptly. 'You have known someone of that name before?' *Yes.* 'Where? in this country?' *No.* 'England?' *No.* 'Scotland?' *Yes.* (Scotland being what I anticipated from the first.) 'Perhaps you know the name of the old estate in Scotland from which we came?' *Yes.* 'Will you name it?' (The name I wanted was 'Auchentorlie,' a word which I do not remember to have heard from the lips of any but my own household here—certainly known to none of those present except my brother, my uncle, and myself. Now I commonly pronounce this name as though the first syllable was spelt with a *k* instead of the *h*, not caring to strive after the Gaelic guttural *ch*.) So the Colonel began—A u c *k* e n t. When the *k* appeared, I noticed the coincidence with my own pronunciation, but also noticed it as an error, and was speculating thereon while the spelling of the word was progressing, but the Colonel pulled up at the *t* and announced a mistake. I questioned upon each of the letters backward, and the *k* was declared wrong and an *h* substituted."

After this it is surprising to read that the gentleman from Baltimore drew the conclusion, "that we were communicating with an intelligence not embodied in the flesh we did not doubt."

A few experiments were made expressly to exclude the directing influence of the questioner's thoughts; but it was found that what the sitter did not know the spirits could not tell.[2] Further than this the ordinary investigator does not seem to have gone. Here and there, indeed, a sceptic did take precautions to prevent observation on the part of the medium. Thus, Professor Page, at a séance with the Fox girls and their mother, effectually concealed the movements of his pencil behind a book, with the result that the raps which he obtained were indistinct and dubious, and the

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 369, 370.
[2] Spicer, *op. cit.*, pp. 239, 240; Asa Mahan, *op. cit.*, 216, 217, etc., etc.

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answers to his mental questions were in five cases out of six incorrect. His experiments, he tells us, were repeated by different investigators, who generally obtained, under like conditions, incorrect answers.[1] Sometimes, indeed, as in a case recorded by Mahan, the answers thus received were ludicrously inappropriate.[2] But to the faithful the results of such an experiment illustrated only the influence of scepticism in frustrating the kindly intention of the spirits. Or, as in the case last mentioned, the comment would be, "Yes, it is certainly odd that the spirit in reply to you should give its name as 'Miserable Humbug,' and say that its diet in the spirit world consisted of 'pork and beans'; and I don't blame you for drawing inferences unfavourable to the medium's honesty; but I have received such convincing tests at other times through the same medium that I feel that I know better." I cannot find any cases at this date recorded at first hand in which precautions against fraud of this kind are even alleged to have been taken with successful results.[3] It would seem, then, that the alleged manifestations of thought-reading by the rapping mediums rests on evidence as inadequate as that for the supernormal character of the rappings themselves.

There was another set of phenomena occurring in 1850, which had obviously some relation to the Rochester rappings, and were regarded by the faithful as almost equally significant of the intervention of the spirit world.[4]

The Rev. Dr. Phelps, of Stratford, Connecticut, was a Presbyterian minister, who had for many years been a believer in clairvoyance, and had himself treated diseases by Mesmerism. He had late in life married a widow with four children —two girls who in 1850 were sixteen and six years of age respectively, and two boys, one eleven and the other three. Dr. Phelps himself was at this time about sixty. On March 10th, 1850, there broke out in his house a series of disturbances, which continued with extreme frequency and violence for several consecutive days, and were renewed at intervals

[1] *Psychomancy: Spirit-Rappings and Tippings Exposed*, by Professor Charles G. Page, M.D., etc. New York, 1853. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

[3] Asa Mahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 199, 200, gives a case, but it is not first-hand.

[4] The documents in the Stratford case consist mostly of letters written during the progress of the events to the *New Haven Journal* and other papers. These are nearly all reprinted in the *Spiritual Philosopher*, together with editorials on the subject by Sunderland. Some additional testimony, in the shape of letters from neighbours, was collected by C. W. Elliott, and published in his book, already quoted, *Mysteries, or Glimpses of the Supernatural*. The following account is compiled mainly from these two sources, and is given as nearly as possible in the words of the narrators.

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for about eighteen months. Objects of all kinds were thrown about the house, apparently by invisible hands; windows were smashed, and a great deal of damage was done; mysterious writings were produced; raps were heard, which, like the Rochester knockings, would give intelligent—and frequently blasphemous — answers to questions. From two letters, written by one Webster, in the *New Haven Journal*, which were regarded by Dr. Phelps himself as amongst the most trustworthy records of the phenomena, I quote the following:—[1]

"While the house of Dr. Phelps was undergoing a rigid examination from cellar to attic, one of the chambers was mysteriously fitted up with eleven figures of angelic beauty, gracefully and imposingly arranged, so as to have the appearance of life. They were all female figures but one, and most of them in attitudes of devotion, with Bibles before them, and pointing to different passages with the apparent design of making the Scriptures sanction and confirm the strange things that were going on. . . . Some of the figures were kneeling beside the beds, and some bending their faces to the floor in attitudes of deep humility. In the centre of the group was a dwarf, most grotesquely arrayed; and above was a figure so suspended as to seem flying through the air. These manifestations occurred sometimes when the room was locked, and sometimes when it was known that no persons had been there. Measures were taken to have a special scrutiny in regard to every person who entered the room that day, and it is known with the most perfect certainty that many of these figures were constructed when there were no persons in the room, and no visible power by which they could have been produced. The *tout ensemble* was most beautiful and picturesque, and had a grace and ease and speaking effect that seemed the attributes of a higher creation."

On another occasion, Webster continues, Dr. Phelps was writing at his table—he was alone in the room—and had turned away for a moment. On resuming his seat he found on his table a sheet of paper, which had been quite clean a moment before, covered with strange-looking writing, the ink still wet. A brickbat was seen to start from a large mirror and fall violently to the floor; letters were seen to drop from the ceiling, and turnips covered with hieroglyphs to grow out of the pattern on the carpet, under the very eyes of the astonished family. Chairs would move deliberately across the room, missiles would start from space and dash through costly panes of glass.

From another witness, H. B. Taylor, writing to the same

[1] Elliott, *Mysteries, or Glimpses*, etc., pp. 184, 185.

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paper, we learn that the elder boy was carried across the room by an invisible agency; that the boy's pantaloons were cut into strips, and the doctor's hat whirled up in the air; that a piece of shingle was seen to fly about the room with unknown characters inscribed upon it; and that the supper-table was lifted thrice from the floor when the room was empty. From a writer in the *Spiritual Philosopher*[1] we learn that letters, written by no human hands, were thrown down from the air. The letters proved to contain mischievous and rather childish satires on Dr. Phelps' brother clergymen and other persons. From Laroy Sunderland, at this time editor of the *Spiritual Philosopher*, we learn that on March 11th, 1850, an umbrella was thrown without human hands some twenty-five feet; that on March 13th several persons saw various articles rise from their places, describe a parobala (*sic*), and descend to the floor; that on the following day a brass candlestick was seen to rise and dash itself against the floor until it was ultimately broken; that a large potato was dropped out of the viewless air on to the breakfast-table within a few inches of Dr. Phelps' plate; that the shovel and tongs, together with the iron stand in which they rested, moved into the middle of the parlour, and then danced upon the floor; that the large dining-room table of solid mahogany was seen to rise two feet into the air; that on another occasion a lamp that was burning on the mantelpiece in the elder boy's bedroom was seen to move across the room and set fire to some papers which lay on the bed; that the boy was found to have been hung on a tree by the invisible agency; that his pants were stripped from his body; that a pillow was drawn over the elder girl's face when she was sleeping peacefully, and a piece of tape tied round her neck with such violence that it all but strangled her. Finally, from one of Dr. Phelps' sons by a former marriage, Professor Austin Phelps, we have the following additional particulars: That as Dr. Phelps was walking across the parlour, no other person being in the room, a key and a nail were thrown over his head and fell on the floor at his feet; and that in the evening, in presence of the whole family, a turnip fell from the ceiling in their midst; that at dinner the spoons and forks would fly up out of the dishes; that one day at dinner a bundle of six or eight silver spoons were all at once taken up and bent double by no visible agency; that on another occasion, when he was alone, the raps directed that Dr. Phelps should put his hand under the table, and that, when he complied, it was grasped by

[1] 1850, p. 70.

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a human hand, warm and soft. Lastly, that the raps purported to come from a Frenchman, named D——s, who had been clerk to a firm of lawyers who had prepared Mrs. Phelps' settlement; that D——s, through raps, asserted that he was in hell, and that he had, when on earth, cheated Mrs. Phelps in drawing up the settlement; that Dr. Phelps investigated the matter, and found clear evidence of fraud in the matter of the settlement, but not sufficient to justify a prosecution.[1]

The affair naturally created much excitement in Spiritualist circles. Andrew Jackson Davis himself came down to Stratford, and gave his certificate to the phenomena. He explained that, speaking generally, the raps were produced by discharges of vital electricity from the elder boy's organism; that when magnetism preponderated in the systems of the boy and girl, nails, keys, books, and other objects would fly *towards* them; when electricity preponderated such objects would be repelled; but that the spirits frequently initiated and directed these movements; that, in fact, as he was impressed to declare, the majority of the disturbances were caused by spirits, of whom he had himself seen no less than five present, as "delegates from the spirit land," in Dr. Phelps' house. The same high authority also recognised the hieroglyphics inscribed on the turnip already mentioned, the boy's pants, and elsewhere, as being spiritual symbols having no affinity with any earthly language, oriental or other. By interior impression he was able to interpret the message of goodwill conveyed, as thus: "A high society of angels desire, through the agency of another and a more inferior society, to communicate in various ways to the earth's inhabitants."[2]

On the other hand, Laroy Sunderland and Mrs. Fish were inclined to attribute the manifestations entirely to the agency of lying, mischievous, or insane spirits, and the former even questioned whether the Poughkeepsie seer had correctly translated the vegetable hieroglyphs. Mr. Beach, whose testimony is quoted below, believed that there was nothing superhuman in these mysterious occurrences. For his part, he did not believe in ghosts. "The theory is," he writes, "that there exists in Nature an element as yet unknown to the scientific world."

In order to secure, if possible, at once the interest of the

[1] From a statement given to the Rev. C. Beecher, and embodied in his book on *Spiritual Manifestations*, pp. 18–24. Boston, 1879.

[2] *The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse* (New York), edition of 1875, pp. 77–117.

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reader and his sympathy with the Spiritualist interpretation of the manifestations, I have ventured, in the preceding pages, to base my account of the Stratford disturbances, not on what the several narrators themselves saw, but on what they understood that other people had seen. Not one of the marvels so far related is described by a person who professes to have been actually present; and Professor Austin Phelps' account was written nearly thirty years afterwards. No eye-witness, indeed, so far as I can discover, ever claims to have seen a turnip issue from the carpet or the ceiling, or a brickbat from the mirror, to have seen Dr. Phelps' little boy carried across the room by an invisible power, or a candlestick jump up and pound against the floor, or inanimate objects describe a parabola, or any other kind of curve, unassisted.

What they did see was much less dramatic. Dr. Phelps tells us that he saw with his own eyes more than thirty broken panes of glass; that he watched the movements of objects with care and close attention; that "I witnessed them hundreds and hundreds of times, and I know that in hundreds of instances they took place when there was no visible power by which the motion could have been produced"; and that he never could find out how the rapping was done. Laroy Sunderland saw some of the hieroglyphs and the letters which had been written by the spirits; he also saw a window in which every pane had been broken; and he heard rapping under his feet whilst he was at breakfast. *Veritas*, writing on September 21st in the *New Haven Journal*, says that he was struck on the arm by a clothes-pin, and is sure that no one in the room threw it. Also that in the parlour a peach stone fell at the feet of one of the members of the family, and that shortly afterwards two or three fragments of apple and a piece of anthracite coal fell at intervals close to him, and that he put a piece of apple in his pocket, and kept it as a memorial of the marvellous incident. Further, that on the following morning a cup, an iron spoon, and a couple of apples were thrown, the latter striking two members of the family.

Mr. Newson, of the *Derby Journal*, writes, that when he and three other persons were standing outside the girls' bedroom listening to the rappings, they heard something thrown with great violence against the door, instantly sprang into the room, and found the young lady (of sixteen) in bed in a very nervous state, with a very red cheek. A large white pitcher had, it was found, been thrown against the door, and broken.

The Rev. Mr. Mitchell saw sentences which had been

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written on the walls, made-up figures which had been arranged in various parts of the house, objects which had been thrown about; also he heard loud noises and screamings.

The Rev. Mr. Weed had also seen the furniture disarranged, and dolls dressed up to look like live figures.

The things which Mr. Beach and Mr. Day saw were so interesting that I quote parts of their accounts in their own words.

Mr. Beach writes in the *New York Sun*, April 29th, 1850:—[1]

"While our conversation was quietly proceeding, there seemed to be a general start of all present, the boy instantaneously sitting up in bed. I was then looking at the carpet, on a line parallel to the front side of the bed and of the mantelpiece, when I caught sight of a matchbox, about four inches long by three wide, within an inch of the floor, if not upon it. I heard a noise corresponding to what would be expected from a heavy iron box of that size, falling from about the height of the mantelpiece; and at the same time saw the box slide toward the bed, and directly away from the mantelpiece about four inches, while the lid flew open, and some matches bounded out upon the floor. The boy denied any agency in the matter, with an expression of innocence that defied the closest scrutiny. . . . A few moments after that event, and while all present occupied their former positions, the boy sat up in his bed as suddenly as before, exclaiming, 'They have set the bed on fire!' I sprang instantly to the spot, and saw a piece of printed paper, etc., on fire; securing a piece of it about the size of a dollar, it proved to be a part of the *Derby Journal*. . . . Again, the ladies stood facing the window and me, and about six feet from me—they were side by side, about two feet apart; no one else was in the room. Suddenly the daughter's right arm straightened, inflicting an apparently severe blow on her companion's right arm, just below the shoulder, and at the same time she cried out, 'I am pinched!' The sleeve of her dress being turned up a little, there was plainly visible a mark closely resembling a severe pinch freshly made."

Mr. Beach's theory of these mysterious occurrences has been already quoted.

Mr. Horace Day writes on September 27th, 1851, to Mr. Elliott, author of the book from which I have frequently quoted:—

"While conversing with the family on the subject of their trials and perplexities, the lady of the house ran into the room, and said that her son, a boy of twelve or fourteen, was missing. Except on the face of the father, I saw no expression of alarm or apprehension. He seemed greatly excited; but the rest of the family, consisting of

[1] Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-3.

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Mrs. P., a daughter, a lady visitor, and her son, certainly manifested no extraordinary emotion. After a few hurried remarks, I noticed that Mrs. P. led the way to the backyard. What reason there was for not first examining the house did not appear. This was the first thing that looked suspicious to me, coupled with the general air of imperturbability over the family. The boy was found in the hay-mow, in an apparently comatose state, from which he recovered in the course of an hour. . . . The similarity of the writing, which Dr. P. showed me as being 'spiritual,' to that of the boy when I got him into a room alone, together with the singular fact that every broken window could be reached only from the doorway of the young ladies' bedroom, conspired to increase my contempt for the whole concern. . . . Dr. P. seems never to have recognised his son's handwriting, though his room was flooded with his lucubrations, in a regular schoolboy's hand."[1]

Further, from a full account of the matter compiled by Capron from the various records preserved by the family, and authenticated by conversation with Dr. Phelps, we learn that, speaking generally, the disturbances centred round the elder boy and girl; that they ceased when the children were sent away; that Dr. Phelps in particular was favoured with several striking manifestations when alone with Harry; and, finally, that when Harry was despatched to a school in Philadelphia, the spirits destroyed his books, tore his clothes, and generally became so outrageous that Harry was brought home again to Stratford, when the disturbances finally ceased.[2]

But perhaps the most interesting evidence is that furnished by Andrew Jackson Davis, in the article already referred to. Confronted with a practical problem in spiritual dynamics, the seer found his position a peculiarly delicate one. Should he pronounce the phenomena to be genuine, it might go hard with his reputation as a philosopher if some of them were afterwards proved to be fraudulent. On the other hand, as a Harmonial Philosopher, it would ill become him to depreciate what his followers already acclaimed as a demoniac visitation. He found safety in a middle course. After giving the certificate already quoted, the seer proceeded to point out that "the young Harry frequently failed to discriminate, during certain moments of mental agitation, between the sounds and effects which he himself made and those sounds which were produced by a spiritual presence"; and he explains as follows the portent of the boy being tied to a tree: "I

[1] Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 201.
[2] *Modern Spiritualism*, etc., by E. W. Capron, pp. 132–71.

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discovered when viewing the circumstance from my *superior condition* . . . that, to control the boy from effecting some premeditated imprudence, a spirit near him, taking advantage of the electrical state of his system, actually made him unconsciously instrumental in tying himself to a tree," and to complete the work, afterwards made the boy feel frightened, and believe that he had called for help, when in fact he had not done so.[1] And again, "It is possible—and my impressions strongly move me to assert the probability thereof—that the spirits have employed some impressible person in the family, or in the Stratford Community, to write some of those communications which were there received, also to arrange the expressive tableaux."[2] No utterance of the Poughkeepsie seer reveals a profounder insight.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 88. [2] Page 112.

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CHAPTER II

SOME DWELLERS IN ARCADIA

SINCE, as shown in a previous chapter,[1] naughty little girls have for many generations amused themselves and mystified their elders by rapping on the foot of their wooden bedsteads and throwing about the less expensive crockery, and the world has gone on as before, we must look to something else than the novelty or the mystery of the manifestations for an explanation of the world-wide results which followed from these exploits of the Hydesville and Stratford children. That explanation is, of course, to be found in the conditions of the time. And first amongst these conditions was the recent familiarity of the American people with the phenomena of the induced trance. As shown in the first part of the present work, these phenomena, which had been known and studied in France, Germany, and generally on the continent of Europe, for more than two generations, had only in the decade 1840–50 attracted any wide recognition in the two great English-speaking countries. That recognition appears to have come at about the same time in both England and America, and through the same means—the demonstrations of itinerant lecturers.

The interest, so recently excited and still actively spreading, in the somnambulic phenomena, helped the cause of nascent Spiritualism in various ways. It furnished, in the first place, a machinery already organised for the rapid spread of the new manifestations, in the shape of a large number of professional clairvoyants. Some of these clairvoyants, like Mrs. Tamlin[2] and Mrs. Bushnell,[3] were not slow to include spirit-rapping amongst their accomplishments. Others were content to work side by side with the rapping mediums who now sprang up throughout the land.

[1] Book I. chapter ii. [2] Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[3] Spicer, *Sights and Sounds*, p. 88. London, 1853.

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From the early Spiritualist journals it is evident that a large part was played in the first few years by healing and trance mediums simply. In the second place, Mesmerism furnished the popular mind with a ready-made philosophy of the whole matter. As previously shown, apart from the general disposition to believe in the marvellous fostered by the various electric, magnetic, and odylic theories, many persons had already been induced through trance utterances to believe in the possibility of spirit intercourse. Of the manner in which Davis and his circle were prepared by clairvoyant revelations for the advent of the new dispensation we have already spoken. Dr. Phelps, of Stratford, had first had his interest excited, some years previously to the Poltergeist manifestations, by the marvels of clairvoyance. So Warren Chase, of whom we shall speak later, had, in 1843, made experiments in Mesmerism with a few friends, and had ordered a dozen copies of *Nature's Divine Revelations* in 1847, as soon as it was issued;[1] and generally throughout the country the attention given to clairvoyance and Mesmerism prepared the way for the greater marvels of Spiritualism.[2] Many even of the chief critics and opponents of the new movement, such as Asa Mahan, B. W. Richmond, and E. C. Rogers, whilst denying the evidence of spirit intervention, found no difficulty, on the strength of their studies in the literature of Animal Magnetism, in accepting the phenomena in the lump. All these writers are agreed in explaining the raps, the movements of tables, and the Poltergeist performances generally, as illustrations of odylic force.[3] To its inventor, the reader should perhaps be reminded, odylic force was an impalpable emanation of such exquisite tenuity that its presence could be detected by no instrument less delicate than the human organism, and that only in persons of exalted nervous sensibility. To harness this exquisite essence to the gross antics of the kitchen furniture was surely an illegitimate extension of the theory.

But probably the mesmeric movement of the previous decade helped the new propaganda most conspicuously by furnishing a band of able editors and lecturers already trained and equipped for service. Of those who assisted at the birth of the *Revelations* and afterwards united in editing the *Univercœlum*, many in the course of the next two or three years

[1] *Forty Years on the Spiritual Rostrum*, pp. 14, 15. Boston, 1888.

[2] For additional instances see *Modern American Spiritualism*, by Emma Hardinge, pp. 274, 346, 408, etc., etc.

[3] See *Modern Mysteries*, etc., pp. 326, 327, and *passim*.

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became editors of papers devoted to one aspect or another of the new movement.

Till as late, indeed, as the end of June, 1849, when the *Univercœlum* ceased to exist, none of the adherents of the Harmonial Philosophy had publicly recognised the importance of the new physical manifestations. But in the spring of the following year, as we have already seen, Davis visited Stratford, there witnessed some of them for the first time, and became convinced of their reality.[1] In the summer of the same year the first number of a paper called the *Spirit Messenger* was published in Springfield, Mass., under the joint editorship of the Rev. R. P. Ambler, a Universalist minister, and Apollos Munn, which appears to have been Davis' chief organ for the next two or three years; for, indeed, partly no doubt alienated by the intolerable arrogance of the Poughkeepsie seer, partly because two of this trade of prophet can rarely agree together for long, the little band of Harmonial Philosophers were soon widely scattered. By the middle of 1851 we find some six or seven papers in existence devoted to the propaganda, in most of which the late editors of the *Univercœlum* had a part. At Auburn was published *Disclosures from the Interior and Superior Care for Mortals*, under the editorship of J. D. Scott and T. L. Harris; and another paper, *The Spiritual and Moral Instructor*, was started in the same town under the editorship of T. S. Hiatt, with Fishbough as a leading contributor. In September, 1851, was published at Boston the first number of *Heat and Light*, a review of A. J. Davis' philosophy, by W. M. Fernald, being the principal article.[2] Again, S. B. Brittan, in 1852, brought out a well-written monthly periodical called the *Shekinah*, which, during its brief career of about eighteen months, represented Spiritualism at its soberest and best. In 1853 appeared *The Spiritual Telegraph*, a weekly paper edited by Brittan conjointly with Partridge, a New York merchant, which lasted for nearly eight years.

But the first in the field of the Spiritualist editors was Laroy Sunderland, whose acquaintance we have made in previous chapters. In July, 1850, Sunderland started in Boston a paper called the *Spiritual Philosopher*, which in the following year changed its title to the *Spirit World*. In his editorial address he offers the hospitality of his columns to all sects, schools, and parties, and "to each world in the constitution of the Universe." But even at this epoch he showed

[1] *Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse*, p. 78.
[2] *Spirit World*, vol. iii. p. 76.

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something of the critical temper which had distinguished his later writings on Mesmerism, for in another article in the same number on the "Spiritual Knockings," after incidentally mentioning that he had himself made pneumatology a subject of investigation for the last thirty years, and had no doubt at all as to the existence of other spheres beyond our own, he reviews the *History* by Capron and Barron, pointing out several difficulties in the spirit theory and defects in the evidence so far adduced. Sunderland had not at that time had the opportunity to satisfy himself as to the origin of the knockings. A few weeks later, however, his own daughter, Mrs. Margaretta Cooper, became a medium; and he writes in October, 1850: "The manifestations of the Spirit World have been continued in our own family in Charlestown, and our Office in Boston, with increasing and wonderful interest . . . the mysterious sounds have been made in nearly all the rooms in our house, and have been heard at different times by different people. The responses to questions are made freely, *at our table*, during meal times, which are thus prolonged often to an hour and a half by conversation with our Heavenly visitants." He adds that articles of furniture had been moved, that the spirits had made musical sounds, that members of the family and strangers had been touched and handled by the spirits, that manifestations had been made to the sense of sight, and, finally, that communications had been vouchsafed, as he believes, "from the *Higher Spheres*, giving important information relating to the Spiritual Dispensation now opening to the Universe of Human Beings."[1]

But this state of exaltation was not to last long. Perhaps his reversion to a more sober state of mind was hastened by the result of a hoax played upon him in the early part of the year 1851. An illiterate letter, purporting to come from a woman who was anxious for news of her dead daughter, was sent to Sunderland. He submitted it to the spirits, and received from them a message of consolation to transmit to the anxious inquirer. The letter, however, was a hoax, and the inquirer and her spirit daughter alike fictitious.[2] But it seems probable that in any case the caution—natural or acquired—which is so conspicuous in his earlier work would have led him sooner or later to reject the extravagant absurdities of the Spiritualists around him.

[1] *Spiritual Philosopher*, vol. i. pp. 68, 69.

[2] Capron, *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 211, 212. The author of the hoax was a clergyman named Austin, who wrote in the *New York Express* under the pseudonym of "Shadrach Barnes."

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In fact, we find that in later numbers, at any rate, of the *Spirit World* Sunderland, though still believing that spirits were concerned in some of the manifestations, yet constantly urges his readers not to put implicit confidence in so-called spirit revelations, nor even to believe that all the phenomena commonly ascribed to spirit intervention have necessarily an extra-mundane cause. He points out that table-tipping and other physical movements, and trance speaking or writing, may often be due solely to unconscious action on the part of the medium; and, generally, that it is unwise to believe that a message comes from Swedenborg or St. Paul, merely because the spirit or the medium says so. A few years later even this qualified belief in Spiritualism seems to have left him almost as completely as his former enthusiasm for Phreno-Mesmerism. Warren Chase mourns over him as a backslider; and in the later book already quoted we find him pointing out that "spirit-possession" can in most cases be explained as possession by the idea of spirits present in the medium's own mind; and that, "unfortunately for 'spiritualism' technically so-called, neither the 'mediums' nor the 'spirits' who speak through them have ever been able to show us where the human ends and the really spiritual begins in these nervous phenomena."[1]

However, at this early period Sunderland seems to have entertained no doubt of the central fact of spirit intercourse; and it is probable that the adhesion thus early in the movement of an investigator of this type, who combined shrewdness and caution with his enthusiasm, and who was already widely known by his lectures and published writings, did much to attract thinking men to the subject.

A man of a different type, who also owed his conversion to Spiritualism mainly to his earlier acquaintance with the mesmeric trance, was the Rev. J. B. Ferguson. Jesse Babcock Ferguson was born in 1819.[2] He went to school at the age of eleven in Winchester, Virginia, and two years later, at the age of thirteen, was chosen by the Presbyterian Missionary Society of Shenandoah and Frederick Counties (Virginia) to conduct a school in a new settlement. The school was carried on at one end of a log house, and a shoemaker, who worked at his trade behind a partition at the other end, held himself in readiness, if required, to assist

[1] *The Trance*, p. 108.

[2] This account is taken partly from the book, *Supra-mundane Facts in the Life of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson*, edited by T. L. Nichols (London, 1865); partly from Ferguson's own book, *Spirit Communion: a Record of Communications from the Spirit Spheres*, etc. Nashville (U.S.), 1854.

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the youthful teacher in keeping order amongst his scholars, some of whom were seven or eight years older than himself. Later he was apprenticed to a printer, and afterwards earned his living by light work in a newspaper office, whilst he attended his classes at the Woodstock Academy. He married young, became the editor of a religious miscellany, and rapidly acquired fame as an eloquent preacher. Finally he settled in Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, and there drew around him a large and devoted congregation. He became, indeed, one of the most noted preachers in the South, received honorary degrees from two universities, and was on many occasions invited to preach before public bodies and to discharge public appointments. Because of his eloquent addresses and exhortations and his pronounced patriotism, he became a notable figure in the Civil War on the Confederate side.

In the years 1842–3, early in his married life, Ferguson had investigated the phenomena of Animal Magnetism, and as a result had satisfied himself of "(1) the possibility of mind acting through the outward senses of other bodies beside its own; (2) of its acting apart from its own and all external senses, and of holding communion with disembodied mind." In his portfolio he had, as he tells us, written in 1844: "If we may be allowed an opinion, where an opinion is scarcely allowable, we would say that from the invisible world there will be such a manifestation of the Saints that the veil of flesh and sense will be rent away, and the connection will be permanent. The Cherubim, or 'living creatures,' will appear upon the earth."[1] His wife was apparently the clairvoyant subject in these experiments, as she afterwards became the medium through whom he chiefly received spiritual communications.

When the rappings and spiritual manifestations first broke out, Ferguson tells us that he was inclined to attribute them to imposture and fanaticism. Some years later, however, in 1853, he visited a rapping medium in Ohio, and witnessed the usual phenomena; received correct answers to mental questions through the alphabet, and a communication purporting to come from a deceased fellow-preacher. Thereafter he was favoured with other manifestations, including the speaking in foreign tongues, and ultimately his wife and young daughter became mediums for writing, speaking, and

[1] *Spirit Communion: a Record of Communications from the Spirit Spheres, with incontestable evidence of personal identity*, by J. B. Ferguson, p. 11. Nashville, 1854.

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seeing visions. An automatic communication given through his wife is quoted in chapter iv. below.

Ferguson's high character, his eloquence, and the breadth and liberality of his religious views gave him wide reputation and influence, and there is no doubt that his advocacy did much to advance the propaganda of Spiritualism in the South. He appears to have kept his faith unchanged until the end. His last public appearance in connection with Spiritualism was in England, whither he accompanied the Brothers Davenport in 1864, in order to introduce them to a new public under the most favourable auspices.

But after all Poltergeists and a widely diffused interest in Animal Magnetism were factors to be found at this time in most European countries. It was rather in the conditions of a new and rapidly expanding civilisation, and perhaps in the special genius of the American people, that the explanation must be sought for the extraordinary spread of the new movement. In the first place, we find a nation in whom the standard of popular education and intelligence was much higher than in England, and probably most other European countries at the same date. But this very diffusion of education was in some aspects mischievous. In the older civilisations the world of ideas is still an oligarchy, with a constitution to some extent fixed and defined. There are recognised standards and precedents for the guidance of thought in every department. But in the American Republic of fifty years ago every man claimed the right to think for himself, and to think as extravagantly and inconsequently as he chose. Again, the geographical conditions gave speculation a freedom which would have been impossible in a more settled society. Even the eastern States were at this time very sparsely populated; civilisation was daily enlarging its boundaries and absorbing more and more of the unclaimed territory around. In 1850 not thirteen in a hundred of the American people lived in towns of 8,000 inhabitants. Thus we find, outside the few large cities, an immense fringe of semi-rural "townships," carved out of the wilderness but yesterday, and filled with an enthusiastic horde of pioneers who had learnt to read and to think from men, or as we have just seen, from children, scarcely better trained and equipped than themselves. In those raw, outlying districts there was no intellectual centre, no recognised conduit through which the gathered experience of the centuries could flow, such as exists in every town and almost every village in Europe. There was inevitably expended on the problems

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of life a large amount of vigorous but crude and undisciplined thinking; and the results stand on record now in the history of various American religious epidemics, of American Socialisms, of American phrenology, of crusades against alcohol, tobacco, pork, and in favour of free land, free marriage, and equality of the sexes.

It is in conformity with this view that we find the early American Spiritualists, almost to a man, adopted every plank of the platform roughly indicated above. Sunderland, indeed, as we have already seen, had cooled somewhat towards phrenology, and seems to have held aloof from most of the popular enthusiasms. But his critical temper was, of course, exceptional. There were no such reserves in the attitude of the ordinary Spiritualist.

Of all the popular enthusiasms of the time, that which was most intimately bound up with Spiritualism was the Fourierite movement, which had shortly before swept in a great wave over the United States. There appears to be some natural affinity between Socialism of a certain type and Spiritualism. The vision of a new heaven will perhaps be most gladly received by those whose eyes have been opened to the vision of a new earth, the dwelling-place of righteousness. It is certain that many Socialists have been Spiritualists. The veteran Robert Owen was converted to the new faith a few years before his death. The Shakers claimed to have had spiritual communications as early as 1837, and to have received at that time predictions of the advent in a few years of fuller revelations:[1] and many of the older American communities were founded by leaders who claimed direct inspiration from spiritual sources. But the connection between the Socialist revival of 1840–50 and the gospel of 1848 was more intimate still. There were those who traced a definite resemblance between the ideas of Fourier and Swedenborg, especially in the doctrine of Universal Analogy taught by Fourier and the well-known "Correspondences" of the Swedish seer. It is certain that there were many disciples of the one prophet who joined in the cult of the other. The list of writers in the *Phalanx* and the *Harbinger*, given by Noyes in his *History of American Socialisms*,[2] contains many names

[1] Elder Evans seems hardly to be justified in his claim. From the (unfortunately anonymous) account of an eye-witness quoted by Noyes (*History of American Socialisms*, pp. 604–9. London, 1870) and from the signed letter given in Spicer's *Sights and Sounds* (p. 349), it seems clear that the alleged communications were not only purely subjective, but that they had little in common with the Spiritualistic manifestations which they were supposed to foreshadow.

[2] Page 212.

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—such as Horace Greeley, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Henry James, and J. Garth Wilkinson—which were afterwards well known in connection with Swedenborgianism or Spiritualism. Of the two leading Socialist communities founded under religious impulses in the early forties, before the main crop of "Phalanxes," Brook Farm, as is well known, cultivated Swedenborgianism; whilst Hopedale, in the person of its founder, the Rev. Adin Ballou, helped towards the propaganda of Spiritualism. Of the two most successful secular communities of the day, the Wisconsin Phalanx was founded by a Spiritualist, Warren Chase, and the North American Phalanx had Horace Greeley as a Vice-President. Nor did the connection between the two movements cease with the revelations of 1848. Two or three years later the Auburn Spiritualists, headed by Thomas Lake Harris and James D. Scott, founded the Mountain Cove Community; while Harris himself later inaugurated a new Spiritualist society at Brocton, N.Y., and afterwards at Santa Rosa, California. Another communist society of the same type was the Harmonial Society, founded under angelic direction by one Spencer, an ex-Methodist minister, and his wife in 1855. Again, T. L. Nichols and other Spiritualists were members of the Socialist community of Modern Times, founded on Long Island in 1851.[1] And many of the "inspired" writings of the time sketched out plans for an ideal society to be founded on communist or phalansterian lines. Andrew Jackson Davis and the other writers in the *Univercœlum*, as already pointed out, preached social reconstruction as the concomitant of spiritual regeneration.[2]

Of the typical American Spiritualist of the early days—the man who began with Socialism and, adding thereto in due course all the other reforms above enumerated, finally found in Spiritualism the creed which would unify all his enthusiasms—no better illustration could be found than in the life of Warren Chase. Fortunately there are ample materials for the study. With a confidence, which again is typical of the man and the time, that what was so profoundly interesting to himself could not fail to have both interest and value for others, he has given to the world two autobiographies—*The Life Line of the Lone One: an Autobiography of the World's Child*,[3] and *Forty Years on the*

[1] *Spiritual Rostrum*, p. 50. An interesting summary of the relations between Socialism and Spiritualism, on which the account in the text is largely based, will be found in Noyes' book, already quoted.

[2] See above, p. 173.

[3] Fifth edition. Boston (U.S.), 1868.

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Spiritual Rostrum[1]—the former dealing mainly with his Socialist, the latter with his Spiritualistic experiences. Born in 1813 in Pittsfield, a little village of New Hampshire, he never saw his father, and his mother, unwedded, died when he was five years old. In accordance with the laws of the State, the friendless orphan was "apprenticed" by the Selectmen of the township to a farmer, who was bound, in return for his services, to feed and clothe the child until the age of twenty-one, leaving him free to attend school in the winter, and giving him a sum of money on completion of the full term. The farmer proved a brutal master, and neglected his side of the bargain, and the boy escaped in his fifteenth year, and was finally bound over by the Selectmen to another family, by whom he was kindly treated. In this new place he had the opportunity of attending school for the first time, soon learnt to read, and made good progress with his studies generally during the next four or five years, passing on from thence to the academy at Gilmanton Corners. Here he appears to have read the works of various Freethinkers, and to have adopted their views. The *Boston Investigator* was at this period of his life his guide, and Rationalism his religion. In 1835, when twenty-two years of age, he left New Hampshire and went away West, into what was then Michigan Territory, to seek his fortunes in new lands. There he found friends, and in January, 1837, married a young girl then employed as school teacher. Of his wife we are told that she had already learnt to eschew pork, tobacco, and coffee, a renunciation which Warren Chase himself did not imitate until some years later, and that she soon gave up her former faith (Baptist) to adopt the views of her husband. In course of the next few years children were born to them, of whom more than one died; and they went through many vicissitudes in trying to make for themselves a home and a living in the still unsettled West. In 1838 they moved to Southport, in Wisconsin, and for some years endured the bitterest poverty, living through a whole winter with their one child on potatoes mainly, with a little flour, milk, and butter, sent by kindly neighbours, hardly richer than themselves, in pity for the delicate child. There, as a homeless, landless outcast, "the World's Child" had opportunity to meditate on social and economic problems. Gradually, as the settlement developed, his worldly affairs improved. He achieved a modest competence, and a certain position amongst his fellow-townsmen; he was appointed

[1] Boston, 1888.

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Street Commissioner and Road Master in 1843. In the following year came the turning-point of his life. He had already, in the winter of 1843–4, been studying Mesmerism, in company with a few friends, under the guidance of Sunderland's paper, the *Magnet*. At the same time he had imbibed from the *New York Tribune* and other journals Fourier's scheme of Socialism. The matter was much discussed through the winter in the local Lyceum. The glowing accounts of the success already achieved, or manifestly about to be achieved, by various communities already organised, fired the imagination of the untaught settlers. They were dazzled by the great vision of peace, order, and harmony, of want and crime abolished, of toil translated by the magic of co-operation into pleasure, and earth made to yield tenfold increase, of the return of exiled Justice, and the vanished reign of Saturn. Early in 1844 they formed an association, with shares of twenty-five dollars each, and sent out a small committee to select a suitable spot for the realisation of their dreams. A tract of virgin soil was chosen in Fond-du-lac County, near the present town of Ripon, situated on the banks of a beautiful stream. They named their new home Ceresco, in honour of the goddess Ceres. Thither, in the middle of May, 1844, the pioneers of the new settlement, nineteen men and a boy, marched with their waggons and household goods, reaching the spot on the seventh day. They at once set to work to prepare for the coming winter.

"The long days were well filled with toil by the pioneer Socialists, and the short nights were devoted to sleep on the ground, under the tents. The Scotch sailor cooked for them in open air, and they ate on rough boards, under the shade of a bower, when it did not rain; and when it did, they ate standing, to avoid an excess of water on the body, and because they could shed rain better in that position. They put in one hundred acres of wheat on the prairie for the next season, and potatoes, and corn, etc., for the running season. On the morning of June 10th the ground was white with frost, and used up most of the corn, and beans, and vines, which they had hurried up on the new sod, so beautifully turned, where no rock nor root was in the way of plough and spade. They also began to erect three dwellings, twenty by thirty feet each, one and a half stories high, and thirty feet apart, which were completed by winter, from oak trees, which furnished, without saw-mills, the frame, the clap-boards, the shingles, and the floors, and all except the stairs and upper floors, which were obtained at a saw-mill twenty-two miles distant, at Waupun. A saw-mill was also erected, and a dam; and on this, in the hardest

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work and most exposed labour, could be found the Lone One, almost every day, never to be beaten at hard labour nor outdone in devotion to what he believed true. It was late in winter before the saw-mill was in running order, and then the stream was frozen too much for use, and they had to winter once without many boards for man or beast. The hay, which was abundant, supplied the place of boards for shelter for beasts and for beds for the families."[1]

The community lasted for six years, the numbers rising at one time to about 180, of whom more than two-fifths were under twenty-one years of age. Of all the communities of the time it was perhaps the most successful. The members worked and danced and sang and held high debate. They solved the religious difficulty by allowing each denomination to use the hall for worship in rotation; they brought up their children and kept themselves free from debt; and when, in 1850, partly through internal friction and jealousy, partly because some among the members were hastening to get rich elsewhere, the society was dissolved, it enjoyed the distinction, unique perhaps amongst the secular communities of the time, of yielding a substantial profit to its members at the division of the communal property. Warren Chase had been its virtual founder, was throughout its existence its leading spirit, and was ultimately entrusted with the duty of winding up its affairs.[2]

But meanwhile the World's Child was beginning to take a prominent part in the larger political life outside. He was at this time known as an active reformer, advocating the abolition of property in land, of usury, of banks and banking, of capital punishment; freedom for the negro; and equal rights of property, of person, and of franchise for men and women. In 1846 he was elected a delegate from Fond-du-lac County to a Constitutional Convention of Wisconsin Territory. In

[1] *Life Line*, pp. 117, 118.

[2] In the following passage he gives its epitaph:—"Had been a great stock and grain grower, raising in one season as high as ten thousand bushels of wheat. Had one genius who did most of its preaching and law business, and others who attended to the sanitary department. Never used intoxicating drinks, nor allowed them on its farm. Never used profane language, nor allowed it, except by strangers. Never had a law suit, nor legal counsel. Had little sickness, and no religious revivals. Never had a case of licentiousness, nor a complaint of immoral conduct. Lived a strictly moral, honest, upright, and virtuous life; and yet was hated, despised, abused, slandered, lied about, and misrepresented in all the country round about—mostly by preachers. Kept a school of its own all the time. Took five or six newspapers to each family. Stopped work on Sunday to accommodate the neighbours, and rung its bell for meetings. But they danced without rum, or vulgarisms and profanity. They had meetings without prayers, and babies without doctors." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 126, 127.)

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1848 Wisconsin was admitted to the Union as a State, and Chase was elected as a member of its first Senate. At the meetings of this body he sat side by side with a fellow-Spiritualist, one Latham Sholes, and in their joint desk they kept for spiritual refreshment and for sale to their fellow-Senators copies of *Nature's Divine Revelations*.[1] In 1849 he was nominated by the "Free Soil" party for the Governorship of the State. For the next thirty years he seems to have taken a prominent part in politics, moving ever westward to new lands, and eventually becoming a member of the Californian Senate. During those thirty years he was also untiring in his advocacy, by lectures and writings, of the new gospel of Spiritualism. Never had cause a more single-hearted nor, for the type of men whom he addressed, it may be surmised, a more persuasive advocate. An enthusiastic visionary, he believed in other men as thoroughly as he believed in himself. It would have been as ungracious as futile to seek to demonstrate to such a man that the movement in which he found the realisation of his dreams for the future of humanity was founded on folly and fraud. He remained happy in his faith until the last, and deserves some better tribute than the numerous "inspirational" poems which, in his later years, were dedicated to him by grateful mediums.

Another convert, gifted with the same childlike simplicity, and with no less enthusiasm for humanity, was John Murray Spear, one of the most attractive figures amongst the early Spiritualists. Born in 1804, he had been baptised by John Murray himself, whose name he bore. As a child he worked in a cotton factory, and thereafter was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Abington, Mass. But his earnest desire was to be a preacher. Ill health and the untimely loss of his hard-earned savings interfered with his purpose for a time; but ultimately, through the aid of his brother and the well-known Universalist, Hosea Ballou the younger, he received the necessary instruction, and preached his first sermon in December, 1828. In 1836 he heard W. Lloyd Garrison speak, at once accepted his views, and thenceforward became a prominent champion of the emancipation of the negro. So much ill feeling was aroused against him by his advocacy of the unpopular cause that he was forced to resign his pastorate in New Bedford, and removed to Weymouth, Mass. A few years later, in 1844, whilst lecturing in favour of Abolition, he was attacked by the mob and so seriously injured that his

[1] *Spiritual Rostrum*, p. 68.

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life was endangered. In the following year he removed to Boston, and in company with his brother Charles published a weekly paper, *The Prisoner's Friend*, designed, as its prospectus explained, to promote the abolition of capital punishment, criminal reform, and the spread of peace and general intelligence. Thereafter for the next six or seven years Spear appears to have devoted himself almost entirely to helping the poor, and especially prisoners or accused persons, by his personal service, advice, and, where needful, money. He would attend the various courts, and go bail for many who must otherwise have been imprisoned pending their trial; he would visit the prisons, and perform all such offices as a large charity could suggest; he would communicate with the prisoners' friends, write their letters for them, sometimes pay their fines, or support their innocent wives and children; and when the prisoners were released he would, so far as his ability served, help them to find honest employment. All this time he was lecturing and writing and doing all that in him lay to further the cause of the prisoner. In one year he is reported to have given as many as eighty-one lectures on prisons and the cause and treatment of crime, to have distributed 7,500 books to prisoners, and to have travelled 8,000 miles.

Outside his lecturing, such work as Spear did no doubt depended largely, if not almost altogether, for its success on the personal influence of the man. A committee which found bail for prisoners would have been liable to be defrauded again and again; and a committee governed, as any such body must be, by definite rules could scarcely have performed to such good purpose, or with such spontaneous grace of human kindness, the innumerable acts of mercy with which Spear's life appears to have been filled during these years. It may have been a wise instinct which led him to refuse compliance with the expressed wishes of many of his friends, that he should form a committee or society rather than work single-handed. But such single-handed effort, however disinterested the worker and however noble the cause, has its peculiar dangers; and if Spear's long and successful labours for the poor and suffering led him at last to believe that he was chosen and appointed from among all the children of men to be the evangelist of a new gospel, much may be forgiven to one who had already done so much, and who had fairly earned the title of the "American Howard."

Spear's attention was first called to the Spiritualist

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manifestations in 1851. On the 31st March of the following year his hand was involuntarily moved to write a message, signed "Oliver," and understood to come from the spirit of one Oliver Dennett, a friend who had nursed him in 1844 during the illness which followed the assault by the mob of anti-Abolitionists already referred to. The message bade him go to Abington, a town twenty miles distant from Boston, where he then was, and call upon one David Vining; the object of the mission was not stated. Spear went as he was bidden, found that a man named David Vining lived, not in Abington, but in an adjacent town, Weymouth, and was then suffering from severe neuralgia. At Spear's touch the pain left him, and he fell later into a refreshing sleep. Spear stated—and no doubt quite honestly—that he had never heard of David Vining until the message came to him; but it is to be noted that Spear had in his youth worked as a shoemaker at Abington, and in manhood had lived for some years in Weymouth, and had therefore probably many links with these localities.

Other missions of a like kind were imposed upon him. Later his hand was moved to execute various drawings, representing in some cases parts of the human body, inscribed with appropriate texts from the Bible and other mottoes. There were also geometrical drawings and strange unintelligible figures, of which no interpretation was vouchsafed. A little later in the same year the spirit of John Murray introduced himself at a séance, and asked that a reporter might be found to take down the discourses which he proposed to deliver through the lips of his namesake. A reporter was found, and the discourses were actually published at the end of 1852, under the title *Messages from the Superior State.* They treat of righteousness, of the glories of the spirit spheres, of the final salvation of all mankind, and of the spiritual illumination which was about to shine upon the world. Spear's later "inspired" writings are treated of below, in chapter v. Spear paid more than one visit to this country, and was a familiar figure at gatherings of English Spiritualists in the earlier years of the movement.[1]

The restless energy of the American people, and their freedom from the restraints imposed in older societies by

[1] The foregoing account of Spear's life is based on the *Biographical Sketch* by Mrs. H. F. M. Brown, in the *Educator* (Boston, 1857), the Preface to *Messages from the Superior State*, edited by S. C. Hewitt (Boston, 1852), and Adin Ballou's *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, chap. xii.

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tradition and authority, were nowhere more conspicuous than in the realm of faith. Unfortunately there was no attempt at an authoritative enumeration of the strength of the various religious denominations until a much later date than that which we are now considering. But it is certain that out of the population of twenty-three millions given by the census of 1850 a relatively large proportion belonged to no special Church.[1] There are many circumstances, indeed, which indicate the fluid character of the religious views commonly held; notably the rapid spread of Millerism and other religious epidemics, the recent revival of Swedenborgianism, and the facility with which preachers and congregations alike from time to time changed their religious tenets. All these features appear to have been symptomatic less of the weakness and instability of the religious impulse than of a certain freshness and spontaneity in its manifestation, strictly comparable with the insistent, childlike questioning of social problems to which reference has already been made.

The ranks of the Spiritualists were naturally recruited largely from those who had freed themselves entirely from the Christian tradition, and had therewith lost all definite hope or belief in a future life. One of the most prominent of these converts was Professor Hare; and by the general testimony of the Spiritualist writers of the time, Hare was but one of many in like case.[2] But the converts who were most active in the propaganda came as a rule from the Churches, and especially from those who, like the Friends, the Unitarians, and the Universalists, held some liberal or attenuated form of Christian doctrine. Thus amongst the earliest converts we find the Friends Isaac Post and George Willetts, the Swedenborgians Courtney, Tiffany, and Bush, and ministers of various denominations, such as Sunderland, Fernald,[3] Newton, Hammond, Ferguson, Allen Putnam, etc.

No religious body gave a larger contingent to the new faith than the Universalists. Of those whose names have already been mentioned as associated with A. J. Davis on the

[1] Judge Edmonds (*Spiritualism*, vol. i. p. 9, eighth edition, by Edmonds and Dexter. New York, 1853) says that there were but five millions of professed Christians; but he gives no grounds for this estimate, and there were no official figures on the subject until much later.

[2] See *e.g.* Edmonds and Dexter, *op. cit.*, vol. i. pp. 53, 61. *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii. pp. 79, 122, 469, etc.

[3] Fernald (*Spirit World*, vol. iii. p. 90) deprecates the title of Swedenborgian; but he certainly at this time held, and continued for many years to hold and express the leading Swedenborgian doctrines. Probably, however, the title of his then recently extinct paper, the *Christian Rationalist*, fairly indicates his position.

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Univercœlum, Harris, Fishbough, and Brittan, as said, were all Universalist ministers, whilst Fernald at one time appears to have been connected with the same denomination. Later, we find prominent in the ranks of Spiritualism R. P. Ambler, Adin Ballou, J. M. Spear, S. C. Hewitt, and many others who had been educated for Universalist pulpits. A correspondent of the *Univercœlum* had expressed his fear lest the new movement should prove merely a division of the older denomination; and charges of the same kind continued to be brought against the Davisian theology. It would be pertinent to inquire, therefore, what special characteristics of the Universalist faith led its followers to bulk so largely in the Spiritualist movement. Universalism, to quote the definition of its American historian, Dr. Eddy, is "the doctrine of the final holiness of all men through the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ."[1] In one form or another the Universalist belief is almost as old as Christianity itself. In America the foundation of the sect is usually ascribed to John Murray. But Universalist tenets were held in America long before Murray, as Dr. Eddy shows. So early as 1636 there were two prominent mystical writers who preached the doctrine, Samuel Gorton and Sir Harry Vane, then Governor of Massachusetts. It is noteworthy that in its beginnings the doctrine seems habitually to have been associated with mysticism. No doubt the central dogma, as commonly held until within recent years—the immediate and unconditional entrance into glory of every human soul at death—is based on the mystical doctrine of the divine and incorruptible nature of the soul, from which it followed that all sin belonged to the body, and that all the consequences of sin ceased with the death of the body. Contributory sources of the faith in America were the Rappists, a sect of German mystics, who migrated to America in 1803, and there founded a Society of celibates, who had all things in common, and looked for the early advent of the millennium; and the Dunkers, or German Baptists, a sect which founded a monastic Socialist community at Ephrata early in the eighteenth century. In fact, the doctrine of Universalism, though not necessarily under that name, has been very generally held by the religious communist societies.[2]

At the time of which we are now speaking the Universalist

[1] *Universalism in America*, by R. Eddy, D.D. Two volumes. Boston, 1884–6.

[2] See Eddy, *op. cit.*; Noyes' *History of American Socialisms*; Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (London, 1875).

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Church in America was in a state of transition. From an early date in the nineteenth century a bitter controversy had been waged within its ranks on the nature of the change at death. The orthodox section, comprising at first the great majority, held what appears to have been the primitive doctrine, that in the next life there is no room and no need for repentance, but that salvation comes to all alike at death. The younger school, called Restorationists, denounced this doctrine as immoral and contrary to the authority of the Bible; their opponents used hard words in return, and the dissension waxed so bitter that in August, 1831, a convention of Restorationists, which included Adin Ballou, drew up a manifesto in which they declared that "the doctrine of no future accountability and immediate entrance into glory" was incompatible with "pure religion and subversive of the best interests of Society," and therewith seceded from the Communion. But notwithstanding this secession, it seems clear that many of those who remained held the same Restorationist tenets, and the rationalist view, in fact, grew so rapidly that, in 1878, a representative convention of Boston Universalists drew up a statement of the general belief of the Church on this subject, in which it is laid down that "we believe that repentance and salvation are not limited to this life. . . . In respect to death, we believe that, however important it may be in removing manifold temptations and opening the way to a better life . . . it has no saving power."

Such, then, was the position of the Universalist Church in the middle of the nineteenth century. Founded originally on a revolt from the rigid and unlovely eschatology of orthodox Protestantism, its younger members had recently carried the rationalising spirit still further, so that some of them had already separated themselves from the parent body, and others still within the pale were less openly working towards the same position. To men who had thus been preoccupied for a generation with the problem of a future life, and who had for themselves evolved the conception of it as a life of probation and progress, the new philosophy of the Spiritualists came as a most welcome and timely revelation. Or it would be equally true to say that their preoccupation with the problem led them to grasp with eagerness those signs and wonders which seemed to hold out the promise of light in the darkness, and to shape their meaning in conformity with their own dearest hopes. It is certainly not without significance that for the first few years, at any rate, several editors of Spiritualist papers and a large proportion of the more

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influential and respected speakers and writers had originally been Universalist ministers.

One of the best known of the early Universalist recruits was the Rev. Adin Ballou, a member of a family who had for two generations occupied a leading position in American Universalism, and who had himself, as already indicated, taken a prominent part, on the rationalist side, in the Restorationist controversy. In 1842, the same year which saw the beginnings of the more famous community of Brook Farm, Ballou had founded near Milford, in Massachusetts, the Society of Hopedale, to be, in his own words, "a miniature Christian republic." In the year 1850 spirit manifestations of various kinds—raps, movements of furniture, "direct" writing and various trance phenomena—appeared in the community. Later, within a few days of the death of their son, the Rev. Adin Augustus Ballou, in February, 1852, the parents received, through the hand of one Elizabeth Reed of the community, messages assuring them of their son's happiness and giving a sketch of his life and surroundings in the spirit sphere, with other information of the customary character. In the middle of the same year Adin Ballou published his testimony, for the following amongst other reasons, as set forth in his Preface: "Because he believes that a just and discriminating faith in Spirit manifestations, such as he sets forth, will promote the regeneration of mankind individually and socially. Because he believes that only the dawn of the manifestations has yet appeared, and desires to assist in preparing all well-disposed minds for the brightness of the approaching day."[1]

Others there were, of a spiritual temperament like that of the early Friends, who whilst still holding to the central doctrines of Christianity, had severed themselves from connection with any Church or Christian society. Josiah A. Gridley was a doctor practising in Southampton, Mass. From his own account of himself[2] we learn that he began life in poverty with feeble health, which had prevented him in youth from pursuing his studies for the ministry, and continued to beset him throughout his later years. He was further hampered in his career by the charge of a wife, also in weak health and at times deranged, and a numerous family. Throughout, however, his main preoccupation appears to

[1] *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, Preface, p. li. Liverpool, 1853. (Reprinted from the second American edition.)

[2] *Astounding Facts from the Spirit World.* Southampton, Mass., J. A. Gridley, 1854.

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have been with spiritual matters. This is his own account of his life history:—

"With an ardent and unwaning desire to find the true and unerring way of God, I ran rapidly through the various and multiform sectarianisms of the churches, as the Congregationalist, Methodist, Unionist, Perfectionist, etc., till I reached Paul's charity, when sectarianism of every form retired, for that is an inclosure into which its profane and unhallowed feet never enter. Yes, I ran through all these, and in 1834–5 I was convicted for a higher life. The sinning and repenting that I had followed under the instruction of all my teachers, from 1816 (when I was fourteen years old), became to me exceedingly loathsome.

"I sought help from the most renowned Spiritualists of that day, but none understood my wants—none knew the unutterable desires of my thirsty soul. I had been filled for years with the blessings of 'Revivals,' but they could no longer reach that aching void. I finally left everything that bore the name of religion and betook myself to God."[1]

But even before he ultimately found spiritual peace, Gridley had been the subject of frequent monitions and angelic interpositions. He was constantly impressed, even before seeing the patient, with the cause of the disease and the treatment to be followed, and attributes the remarkable success of his practice to his communion with the spirit world. He gives an instance in which, in 1842, he believed himself to have been the medium for effecting a miraculous cure. He was seated at the bedside of a dear friend, having done all that his art could effect to relieve her pain, and believing her to be near death.

"In this emergency, with external hope cut off, I seated myself at her bedside with my forehead in my hand, and my elbow resting on my knee. In this position I opened my mind upward. The swelling tide from the spirit world *set in*, while each rolling surge which came in quick succession carried up my spirit to a point of faith and *power* that seemed to me *omnipotent*. The object I dreamed not, but instantly as on the next buoyant surge, were evolved these words, which echoed through my spirit, mighty as the roar of a thousand thunders, 'In the name of the living Christ, I bid these pains leave you.' I knew she was healed."[2] . . .

He did not move or speak, but the pain left the patient and she recovered. Like celestial guidance, as he believed, followed him also in his business matters; on more than one

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 231. [2] Page 188.

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occasion saved his life or that of others; directed him in all his actions, telling him when to give and when to withhold charitable doles; for the space of some months, for his own spiritual edification, forbade him to make any charge for his medical services; and ultimately for a season withheld him from practising his profession at all.

Finally, within a few weeks of the death of his son Albert, he was privileged to have an interview with him in the spirit.

"My spirit stretched itself immeasurably and inconceivably into the sympathetic network of the heavens in its lengthened desires for my son. Within two or three minutes he was by my side. After exchanging the fulness of our affections upon each other, which no language of earthly lovers can reach, as I had desired, he first most strikingly and unmistakably impressed me with his identity. He then showed me his condition and the body he occupied—the heavenly radiance that glowed from within and through that body may be *felt* better than uttered. It was transparent; I could see through it, yet its lineaments were clear and well defined; it was verily a glorified body . . . I now desired to know whether he remembered the Truths of which we had so often spoken together during the last years of his earthly pilgrimage, and whether he was still interested in them. In reply, had he instantly daguerreotyped them in letters of fire on the wall before me, they could not have appeared more clear and distinct. Such a conception is very near the truth—they seemed to roll out from the glorious body that stood beside me like a rapidly unfolding canvass, till they completely covered the whole wall of the room." [1]

A man whose lifelong experience had thus anticipated the teachings of the Spiritualists became inevitably one of the early converts to the new faith. It was not until February, 1852, however, that he came into close contact with the movement. In that month he found a medium in his own household, in the person of a young man who had been a personal attendant on his deceased son Albert. From this time he held almost daily converse with the "spirits." There can be no doubt that Gridley's simplicity offered a strong temptation to the young man Nathan, and probably to other members of his household. The most singular scenes of confusion and disorder took place at the early séances, explained by later utterances as denoting war between good and evil spirits who were contending for the body of the medium. Articles of furniture were moved about; spirit messages were written in various parts of the house in chalk;

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

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and on one occasion a famous manifestation of a later date was anticipated—the breakfast-table was laid by spirit agency.[1]

The earlier communications to the circle appear to have been written or spoken almost exclusively through the organism of the young man aforesaid, the communicating intelligences purporting to be the son already mentioned, one or two intimate friends of Gridley, or of other members of the circle, and occasionally more famous personages. Later, Gridley himself became a medium, and was "impressed," like Davis, to utter spiritual truths.

The communications, not unnaturally, reflected Gridley's own peculiar views on spiritual matters. Much of the book, indeed, is devoted to the defence of the Christian doctrines and the biblical miracles from the attacks of A. J. Davis.[2] Apart, however, from these apologetics and the affirmation, again in opposition to Davis, of the existence of evil as something in its nature distinct from good, the book differs little from other revelations of the period. It enters minutely into the geography of the spirit spheres, the nature of the spiritual body, and other matters of the kind. There are, moreover, traces of one or two mystical doctrines to be found; especially the "interior" breathing, which Gridley describes as a real physical experience of his own;[3] and which afterwards figured prominently in T. L. Harris' later mystical writings.

Of those whose faith in a future life, tottering apparently under the stress of a recent bereavement, was restored and enlarged by the Spiritualist manifestations, the most notable instance was John Worth Edmonds, next to Andrew Jackson Davis the most popular and most influential of the early American writers on the subject. Judge Edmonds had been a Senator of the State of New York, and a State Prison

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

[2] The defence was not perhaps always successful from the orthodox standpoint, as the following extract will show. Gridley had asked the spirits for an explanation of the sun's standing still in the valley of Jehoshaphat, Davis having said that Joshua's statement was mistaken. The answer is:—

"Mr. Davis sometimes draws hasty conclusions. When he affirms that the laws of nature are as unchangeable as their Eternal Author, he affirms the truth; but the laws of Nature in Joshua's time might have produced some wonders equal to those in our own day, when we have seen the ignorant cobbler, in an incredibly short time, converted into one of the profoundest philosophers of the age. Mr. Davis should know that an angel's face, acting as a mirror or luminous cloud of the right density, could reflect the sun's descending rays for a much longer period than usual, upon the contending armies of Israel. Cannot the merest schoolboys with a couple of mirrors make the sun stand still all day in the bottom of the deepest well, if they choose?" (p. 74).

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

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Inspector, and at the time of his first public utterances on Spiritualism was a judge of the Supreme Court of the State, and in the fifty-second year of his age. He describes his initiation as follows:—

"It was in January, 1851, that my attention was first called to the subject of 'spiritual intercourse.' I was at the time withdrawn from general society; I was labouring under great depression of spirits. I was occupying all my leisure in reading on the subject of death, and man's existence afterwards. I had in the course of my life read and heard from the pulpit so many contradictory and conflicting doctrines on the subject that I hardly knew what to believe. I could not, if I would, believe what I did not understand, and was anxiously seeking to know if, after death, we should again meet with those whom we had loved here, and under what circumstances. I was invited by a friend to witness the 'Rochester Knockings.'"[1]

His attention was arrested by what he then saw, and by his reflections on the momentous consequences which must follow, if the Spiritualist interpretation were the true one. He invoked the aid of several friends, amongst them an accomplished electrician, and together they attacked the problem. In the course of a few months' investigation Judge Edmonds satisfied himself that the rappings and other physical phenomena were not due to any human agency. But what impressed him from the first at least as much as the raps themselves, and the movements of tables and chairs and musical instruments which accompanied them, was the apparent ability of the power which caused the raps to respond to mental questions. Of the explanation of this seeming mystery enough has already been said in a previous chapter. Further, on one occasion his doings on a voyage were faithfully chronicled for the benefit of his friends at home, and other indications of supernormal powers of acquiring knowledge were vouchsafed to him.

In August, 1853, in order to meet the constant attacks in the Press, he made a public profession of his new faith and the nature of the investigations which had led up to it. Later in the same year his young daughter Laura, who had hitherto, on account of her religious belief, held aloof from her father's pursuits, became developed as a medium. She gave in the first place various proofs of clairvoyance; and later spoke several languages unknown to her in the normal state; her musical powers also became largely developed; and she frequently described spirits unknown to her, who were

[1] *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, vol. i. p. 71.

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recognised from her description as friends of persons present with her.[1] Meantime, through the years 1853 and 1854, Judge Edmonds, with a few chosen friends, was holding a circle for the receipt of spiritual communications through the mediumship of himself, Dr. Dexter, and others. Copious extracts from these communications were published in the two portly volumes already referred to, the first in 1853, the second early in 1855. The work appears to have had an enormous sale, and no doubt exercised a great influence on the rising faith. The spirits who chiefly communicated to the little circle were Swedenborg and Bacon; Luther and Calvin were reported as present on one occasion, but left without giving any token or message.[2]

Such in brief were the social and intellectual conditions in which the new religion had its birth, and such were its first apostles—lecturers on Mesmerism, Socialists and reformers, revivalist preachers, Unitarian and Universalist ministers. Laroy Sunderland and J. R. Buchanan, and somewhat later, Professors Hare and Mapes, represented the critical and philosophic aspect of the new movement, and gave it what seemed an assured scientific foundation. The strong impulse which transformed the tricks of mischievous children, in other circumstances merely a nine days' wonder for a gaping village, into the beginnings of a new gospel of hope and freedom proceeded from men like Warren Chase and John Murray Spear, full of crude but sincere aspirations for the bettering of the world; men whose eyes were often blinded by the very splendour of their distant ideals to all that was sordid and contemptible in the present. There were many men of the same type who were at that very time labouring for the abolition of negro slavery; and it is interesting in this connection to note that at a later period both Abraham Lincoln and William Lloyd Garrison professed their faith in Spiritualism.

The shaping of the doctrines of the new religion was the work of men, many of whom shared with the Socialists and reformers their large enthusiasms and their generous incapacity to see the trickeries and mean egotisms which surrounded them, but whose aspirations tended to religious rather than to social ideals. These men came for the most part, as we have seen, from the outlying fringes of orthodoxy, the Churches in which, under the powerful solvent of in-

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 44, 45.

[2] For some accounts of these spirit communications and of Edmonds' other experiences see below, chaps. iii., iv., and v.

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tellectual freedom, the sharp outlines of dogmatic Christianity were already beginning to disappear. There were comparatively few Methodists and Episcopalians amongst the advocates of the new faith, but many Friends, Unitarians, and Universalists. Sometimes, as would seem to have been the case with Judge Edmonds and Adin Ballou, the intellectual openness to new ideas was quickened under the stress of recent bereavement into a vivid personal craving.

In this manner for a time the new faith seemed to focus in itself much that was finest and most generous in the religious and social aspirations of the growing nation, and spread through all classes of society with a rapidity and persistence unapproached by any other religious movement of modern times.

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CHAPTER III

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

SO far, in considering the phenomena presented at spirit séances, we have confined our attention mainly to the rappings. But while these remained for some time the chief source of interest and the standard means of communication with the invisible intelligences, other physical phenomena were soon added. So early as the autumn of 1849, indeed, Capron and Barron, in their *History*,[1] record a series of séances, with Mrs. Tamlin apparently as chief medium, though Catherine Fox occasionally assisted, at which tables were rocked and tilted, small objects moved about, a guitar played, and so on. The Rev. C. Hammond's account of a séance with the Foxes, in January, 1850, testifies to similar phenomena.[2] Later in the same year, as we have already seen, Sunderland was favoured with a surprising variety of manifestations in the domestic circle. In many of the earlier sittings the phenomena, as in the Hammond case and in Tallmadge's account quoted below, seem to have taken place in the light, the table round which the circle sat affording sufficient cover for the musical performances and other manifestations. Sometimes, indeed, as in the two cases last cited and in Elliott's séance,[3] the investigator was alone with the two, or three, Fox girls and their mother.

But when a larger circle was to be entertained—and the circles of the day frequently numbered from twenty to thirty persons—the advantages of darkness and of singing or piano playing during the period of incubation were early perceived. Capron's séances in 1849 were held in the dark; and the more violent physical demonstrations nearly always took place, if the circle was a large one, in the dark.[4] The sitters were

[1] Pages 69 *et seq.* [2] Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–32.
[3] Quoted in his book, *Mysteries, or Glimpses*, etc., pp. 146–51.
[4] See *e.g. Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 126, vol. iii. pp. 102, 103, etc.

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also, as in later times, generally enjoined to sing or play on some musical instrument — a compliment which the "spirits" frequently reciprocated by rapping an accompaniment to the tune. In these earlier séances, again, the precaution of holding hands all round the circle appears to have been frequently, but by no means invariably, observed.

Very few critical accounts of the earlier séances have been preserved; but they are not needed. The accounts given by Spiritualists themselves, when they condescend upon detail, are sufficient to show that we need look for no other cause for the results described than trickery of the most trivial and vulgar kind—trickery for the most part too obvious to need a commentary.

But as I desire to put the case at its strongest, I propose to select in the present chapter the best accounts which I can find given by Spiritualists, beginning with extracts from the personal experiences of some of the leaders of the movement, told by themselves.

One of the most distinguished of the early converts was the Hon. N. P. Tallmadge, Governor of Wisconsin. In a letter to a friend, dated April 12th, 1853, which was published in most of the journals at the time, he gives some account of his experiences, the most remarkable of which were connected with the "spirit" of the late John C. Calhoun. He held, on dates not specified, several sittings with the Fox family—the mother and two unmarried daughters—generally with no other persons present. At these sittings he received, through the raps, communications purporting to come from Calhoun. The table was also alleged to move when no one was near it. Further, on one occasion Tallmadge tells us that he sat *on* the centre of the table, and the three ladies sat at the sides, with their hands and arms resting upon it. Notwithstanding this added weight, the table rose, "*and was suspended in the air about six inches above the floor.*" Tallmadge pours just scorn upon the hypothesis, put forward by some ignorant persons, that this stupendous manifestation could be explained by electricity. At a later séance bells and a guitar were placed on a drawer under the table, and music of indescribable beauty was produced. The climax was the production of direct spirit-writing. The first sitting held for this purpose was a comparative failure. The mediums were the three Foxes, and Tallmadge was the single sitter; but only a few vague pencil marks were produced.

Through the raps, however, an appointment was made for

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the following Friday (date not specified), at seven. Apparently the sitters were the same as before.

"We met, pursuant to appointment, took our seats at the table, our hands and arms resting on it as usual. I placed the paper with my silver-cased pencil on the drawer, and said:—

"'My friend, I wish the sentence to be in your own handwriting, so that your friends will recognise it.' He replied, 'You will know the writing.' He then said, 'Have your minds on the spirit of John C. Calhoun.'

"I soon heard a rapid movement of the pencil on the paper, and a rustling of the paper, together with a movement of the drawer. I was then directed to look under the drawer. I looked, and found my pencil outside of the drawer, near my feet, but found no paper on the drawer where I placed it. On raising up the drawer I discovered the paper all under it. The sheets were a little deranged, and on examining, I found on the outside sheet these words: '*I'm with you still.*'"

Tallmadge showed the sentence to several friends, who, according to his report, recognised the writing as "a perfect facsimile" of Calhoun's; and two witnesses added that the abbreviation "*I'm*" was characteristic of the deceased statesman. Upon which Tallmadge comments:—

"How significant, then, does this fact become! We have not only the most unequivocal testimony to the handwriting itself, but, lest any skeptic should suggest the possibility of an imitation or a counterfeit, this abbreviation, peculiar to himself, and known only to his most intimate friends, and which no imitator or counterfeiter could know, is introduced by way of putting such a suggestion to flight for ever."[1]

Another well-known name is that of William Lloyd Garrison, who gave his testimony in the *Liberator* of March 3rd, 1854. At the sitting which he describes the medium was Mrs. Brown (formerly Mrs. Fish). The date is not given, but it occurred "recently." The circle consisted of ten persons, four of whom were ladies. Raps and other demonstrations were given. Then by means of the raps the alphabet was called for, and

"letter by letter, it was rapped out that the medium must put her feet in the custody of one of the party, and then we were told to wait for demonstrations. This was evidently done to convince

[1] *The Healing of the Nations*, by Linton and Tallmadge, pp. 474-82. New York, 1858.

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everyone present that the medium had nothing to do with the phenomena, by way of fraud or collusion; and during the entire sitting (a protracted one), before any remarkable feat was performed, the medium was invariably ordered to take such a position as to render it clearly impossible for her to be privy to it. The presence of several spirits was indicated during the evening, and satisfactory tests were made; but the most communicative and efficient one purported to be that of 'Jesse Hutchinson.' It was he who had been playing bo-peep with us under the table; and now that the medium was secured to the satisfaction of all present, he renewed his salutations not only to us personally, but to nearly every one of the circle. The ladies had their dresses, and the gentlemen their pantaloons, pulled, and their feet patted, in the most emphatic manner. . . . He then spelt out the following communications by the alphabet: 'I am most happy, dear friends, to be able to give you such tangible evidence of my presence. The good time has truly come. The gates of the New Jerusalem are open, and the good spirits, made more pure by the change of spheres, are knocking at the door of your souls.'"

After this a bell was put under the table and rung, and a stick was moved about; three spirits, two of them being the well-known Abolitionists, Isaac T. Hopper and Jesse (Hutchinson), wrote their autographs on paper placed for the purpose in the same spot, and spirit hands grasped—also under the safe cover of the table—the feet and hands of the company.[1]

Adin Ballou unfortunately gives no details of his personal experience of the physical phenomena; he merely recounts, in general terms, that he had heard at the circle noises of various kinds, had seen tables and other articles of furniture move about, with or without contact of the medium's hands, and had witnessed "direct spirit-writing," besides other lesser marvels.[2]

Judge Edmonds' testimony to the physical manifestations is also wanting in detail. In his *Appeal* to the public, dated August 1st, 1853, he merely describes in general terms levitation, tiltings, and other violent movements of tables and chairs, ringing of bells, and so on. But there is one particular manifestation, reference to which is excluded from the *Appeal*, because it occurred when Judge Edmonds was alone, which possesses a special interest, since we have two

[1] Quoted by Hare, *Experimental Investigation*, etc., pp. 327–9. Hare ascribes the account to *Henry* Lloyd Garrison, but there seems to be no doubt that the famous Abolitionist is intended. The séance is referred to in the *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. p. 418, and *William* L. Garrison is said to have been present. [2] *The Modern Spirit Manifestations*, pp. 19, 20.

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accounts of it, written by the judge at a considerable interval. This is the later account, dated March 13th, 1859:—

"And, finally, after weeks of such trials, as if to dispel all idea in my mind as to its being done by others, or by machinery, the rappings came to me alone, when I was in bed, when no mortal but myself was in the room. I first heard them then on the floor, as I lay reading. I said, 'It's a mouse.' They instantly changed their location from one part of the room to another, with a rapidity that no mouse could equal. 'Still, it might be more than one mouse.' And then they came upon my person—distinct, clear, unequivocal. I explained it to myself by calling it a twitching of the nerves, which at times I had experienced, and so I tried to see if it was so. It was on my thigh that they came. I sat up in bed, threw off all clothing from the limb, leaving it entirely bare. I held my lighted lamp in one hand near my leg, and sat and looked at it. I tried various experiments. I laid my left hand flat on the spot—the raps would be then on my hand, and cease on my leg. I laid my hand edgewise on the limb, and the force, whatever it was, would pass across my hand and reach the leg, making itself as perceptible on each finger as on the leg. I held my hand two or three inches from my thigh, and found they instantly stopped, and resumed their work as soon as I withdrew my hand.

"'But,' I said to myself, 'this is some local affection, which the magnetism of my hand can reach.' Immediately they ran riot all over my limbs, touching me with a distinctness and rapidity that was marvellous, running up and down both limbs, from the thighs to the end of the toes."[1]

On comparing this account with that given in a contemporary extract from his diary,[2] we find some interesting variations:—

(1) Nothing is said about the raps on the floor preceding the raps on the thigh: the account in the diary begins, "To-night, after I had gone to bed, and while I lay reading . . . I felt a touching on my left thigh," etc.

(2) Nothing is said about the raps being felt on the hand when laid flat on the limb; on the contrary, it is expressly stated that this procedure stopped the manifestation.

(3) Nothing is said about the stopping of the raps when the hand was held two or three inches from the thigh.

(4) "They ran riot all over my limbs" is represented in the contemporary account by the following sentence: "After

[1] Originally published in the *New York Tribune*, March, 1859. Reprinted in *Letters and Tracts*, p. 156. Memorial Edition. London, James Burns (no date). [2] *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, vol. i. pp. 18, 19.

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this there came a storm of touchings from my *left* big toe, all the way up my *leg* to the upper part of my thigh. . . . This storm ran up and down my *leg* several times in a perfectly straight line," etc. From a perusal of this earlier account there seems no sufficient reason for regarding the experiences as other than subjective.

In the case of some other manifestations witnessed by Judge Edmonds, we also have the advantage of two accounts, in this case by different witnesses. C. W. Elliott quotes a report, dated 25th May, 1851, given him by a friend, of a séance at which two young men of Springfield (Gordon and Cooley) were the mediums. The séance was held at the house of Charles Partridge on the 21st May, and Edmonds, Gray, and some fifteen or twenty others were present. In the first place Gordon gave various manifestations of trance speaking and writing:—

"After this the spirits desired the lights put out, and, every vestige and gleam of light being excluded, in the most pitchy darkness, a series of proceedings took place, which utterly and entirely disgusted me; of course, anything done in the dark is useless, so far as convincing people goes. We sat and listened, for about one hour and a half, to a perfect pandemonium of noises, bangs on the table as loud as could be made by hand or foot, loud slaps, bells ringing loudly, the table creaking, flapping its leaves and turning quite upside down, as was announced by the exclamations of those about it, Judge Edmonds continually exclaiming, 'I'm touched—now I am tapped on the shoulder—hear that—now they are at my feet, now my head,' and then he would cry out, 'They are pulling my coat-tails—they are pulling me towards Margaretta (Fox)' . . . . Meanwhile the white-haired (medium) was going on in the most extraordinary manner, crying out, seemingly scuffling and contending with spirits who wanted to take possession of him. At one time Dr. Gray says, 'They have lifted him up in the air,' and someone else rejoined, 'No, he is standing on his chair'; at length, amid a loud outcry, and exclamations of, 'Don't, I don't want to; leave me alone,' accompanied by the noise of a struggle, he was dragged into the closet and shut up there; this we knew from Dr. Gray's exclamations. Presently Dr. Gray was also sent in there, then Judge Edmonds, finally all the mediums and some others. We were then favoured with the most absurd series of noises from this closet that ever was heard: loud bangings, a chorus of Auld Lang Syne, sung by all the *closetees*, accompanied by raps on the door, and scrapings on an old violoncello, which was in the closet, violent ringing of bells, which were afterwards hurled out into the room, and then rang all around a sort of accompaniment to the music in the closet. . . . We left

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them at last at half-past eleven still in there, the noises going on as loud and meaningless as ever."[1]

Fortunately, Partridge published a full report of the proceedings at this séance in the New York papers, from which we learn that, in addition to Gordon and Cooley, E. P. Fowler and Mrs. Fox and her daughters were present. The most interesting variation is in Partridge's account of the spirit lights seen at the beginning of the dark séance, which do not appear to have been visible to Elliott's correspondent.

"At the stage of the proceedings last alluded to it was proposed by someone to darken the room, in order to try whether the lights or sparkles known frequently to accompany the manifestations in former instances would be perceptible. It was accordingly done, and the lights were observed at different times and in different parts of the room—sometimes resembling phosphorescent flames, sometimes forming luminous clouds moving about, sometimes like glistening stars, crystals, or diamonds. Physical demonstrations increased in variety and force, and continued for three hours, 'during which,' says Mr. Partridge, '*the Judge seemed to be in the possession of the spirits.*' Many things occurred to him, which he mentioned, that he alone could be conscious of, though we could perceive that something extraordinary was going on with and around him. Many things, however, also occurred which all could witness."[2]

In other respects—except for the omission of all mention of the "levitation"—the account given by Partridge agrees pretty closely with that furnished by Elliott's correspondent, the main difference being in the mental attitude of the reporter. Judge Edmonds himself, in describing this séance, states that his experience on that night finally convinced him that the manifestations were produced by no mortal agency.[3]

It is interesting to note that Edmonds professes to have seen on various occasions the odic light issuing "like a pale, shadowy smoke" from the magnet, the human head and fingers, and from the members of the circle before a séance.[4]

Almost the only experiences in these early days to which the name of experiments could be applied were those recorded by Dr. Hare, sometime Professor of Chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania, and a member of many

[1] *Mysteries, or Glimpses of the Supernatural*, pp. 167, 168.
[2] Quoted in *Sights and Sounds*, p. 120, etc. The account given by Spicer is considerably abridged, and I have not had the opportunity of consulting the original. [3] *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, vol. i. pp. 25–7.
[4] *Letters and Tracts*, pp. 169, 170; from a letter to the *New York Tribune*, dated April, 1859.

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learned societies. Even here there was nothing that deserved to be called scientific investigation. The machinery, indeed, was not ill-devised, but its use did not dispense with the necessity for close and continuous observation of the human agent; and there is no evidence that Hare recognised this necessity, or took any steps to guard against trickery.

He was, at the time when his attention was first called—in the summer of 1853—to the spirit manifestations, already seventy-two years of age, and his book,[1] published two years later, shows him to have been ready—when once his first repulsion from the subject had been overcome—to accept without questioning the most amazing testimony, and to place implicit trust in the mediums with whom his investigations were conducted.

Briefly, Hare's apparatus was of two kinds. The first, a wooden board about four feet long, supported on a fulcrum about a foot from one end, and at the other end attached by a hook to a spring balance. A glass vessel filled with water was placed on the board near the fulcrum, between it and the spring balance; a wire gauze cage attached to an independent support, and not touching the glass at any point, was placed in the water, and the medium placed one or both hands in the wire cage. In this position he could, of course, exercise no appreciable effect on the balance if he was effectually prevented from touching the apparatus at any other point. Nevertheless, on several occasions the balance showed a variation of weight, on one occasion indicating the exertion of a force of eighteen pounds at what was assumed to be the point of application. Gordon was the medium on this occasion; but the medium generally employed for this class of manifestation was a little boy of eleven, of whom we shall hear more later. No details of the experiments are given, and there is no evidence that any measures were taken to prevent the medium from forcing up the short end of the lever. The experiment, indeed, is chiefly of interest as having apparently furnished the model for the more elaborate trials of a similar nature conducted some years later by Sir W. Crookes.

The other machine, of which Hare invented several varieties, consisted essentially of a revolving disc, with the letters of the alphabet printed round its circumference, and attached to a table. The disc was actuated by a band passing over a small wheel, attached to one leg of the table or

[1] *Experimental Investigation: The Spirit Manifestations*, etc., by Robert Hare, M.D. New York, 1855.

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fastened to a fixed weight on the floor, so that as the table moved different letters would come under the pointer. The primary object of the device was to secure that the medium should not see what letters were indicated by the pointer. Further, it was sometimes sought, by placing on the table a small board supported on castors or on metal balls, and causing the medium's hands to rest on the board, to prevent the medium from exercising any direct force on the table except in a downward direction. Again no details are given of the experiments, not even, as a rule, the names of the medium and the persons present; and there is no indication that any precautions were taken to guard against trickery on the part either of the medium or her friends. The only particulars of interest which Hare gives are that the spirits always expressed a dislike to the use of the board supported on castors or balls, and professed to find it extremely difficult to give intelligible messages when the medium could not see the alphabet, because, as they explained, it was in such a case necessary to see through Hare's eyes. Some "spirits," indeed, through the mouths of their mediums, refused to have anything to do with the machines, or tried and failed to produce any results.[1]

Even if we had the fullest confidence in Dr. Hare's competence as an investigator, it is clear that experiments of this kind, unless carried out with the most stringent precautions, could carry little weight. But his readiness to accept the most amazing and ludicrous accounts from others; his own complete faith in the communications received from various spirit worthies—Washington, Franklin, etc.; and, finally, the simplicity shown in the following extract from a speech delivered at the New York Conference in September, 1854, show that any confidence in his capacity for an investigation of this nature would be misplaced. I have not space to quote the whole speech, but a brief extract will no doubt suffice. Hare was on his way to attend the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Montreal. He was accompanied by a boy-medium, apparently the same boy who was the medium in the balance experiments.

"Next morning, while yet in their state-room on board the boat, they [*i.e.* Hare and the boy] found the door locked and the key missing. They searched for a long time unsuccessfully, when the spirits said it was in the bottom of the carpet-bag. But the key of

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 41–3, etc.

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the carpet-bag was also gone, when the spirits said it was at the bottom of the trunk, and on taking out the baggage they found it, and then found the key of the door at the bottom of the carpet-bag.

"When they arrived at Montreal and put up at their hotel, he hunted his baggage for his toilet-case, but could not find it. The spirits told him it was under the bolster of his bed. He raised the bolster and searched, but could not find it. He had his eye upon the boy all the time. The spirits told him to look again, and upon raising the bolster again, precisely where he had looked before, he found it. It was impossible, he said, that the boy could have done this, for he stood in the same place all the time, and could not have moved without his seeing him.

"The next evening they went to a large party, at the house of a lady, to hold a circle. They had packed the spirit-scope, balls, and other apparatus in the carpet-bag. There were many sceptics and disagreeable persons present, many counter-mediums, as he supposed. When they came to open the carpet-bag they could not find the key. They went to the table, but could not get any communications. They entered into another room with the boy, and the spirits spelled out, by means of raps, that he would get the key before he got home. Whilst he was riding along the streets of Montreal on his way home the key came down upon his breast!

"On another occasion, while alone with the boy in their room, and after they had locked up the balls, spirit-scope, shaving-case, etc., in his carpet-bag, the balls were, in some inscrutable way, taken from the carpet-bag and fell upon him in a shower. Then came the box, razor-strap, etc., all falling, apparently, from above, on and around him."[1]

Among the most widely celebrated manifestations of these early days were the spirit-writings given through the mediumship of Mr. E. P. Fowler, a younger brother of the well-known phrenologist. The case is of special value for our present purpose as having been the leading case selected as illustrative of the phenomena in general, in a discussion between Brittan, editor of the *Shekinah*, and Dr. B. W. Richmond, a friendly sceptic, which was carried on in 1852.[2]

Mr. Fowler, a young medical student, was a member of the New York circle. This is his own account of the first spirit-writings, contained in a letter written at Brittan's request on March 26th, 1852, and published in the *Shekinah*:—[3]

". . . On the night of the 21st November, 1851, while sleeping alone in the third story of the house, I was awakened about one

[1] Quoted in *Modern American Spiritualism*, by Emma Hardinge Britten, p. 118. London: J. Burns (no date).
[2] Republished in book form in the following year at New York.
[3] Vol. i. pp. 301-4.

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o'clock by sounds of footsteps in my room. Looking up, I saw five men, some of them dressed in ancient costume, walking about and conversing together. Some of them spoke with me, and among other things told me not to be frightened, that they would not harm me, etc. I attempted to rise, however, to go downstairs, but found that my limbs were paralysed. These strange visitants remained with me about three hours, and finally disappeared while going towards a window and when within about two feet of it. They did not open the window. During the succeeding night, and at about the same hour, I was again awakened in a similar manner, and saw several persons in my room. Some of those who were there on the previous night were present, with others whom I had never seen before. One of them had what appeared to be a box about 18 inches square; it seemed to contain electrical apparatus. They placed the box on the table, and then electrical emanations, like currents of light of different colours, were seen issuing from the box. One of the company placed a piece of paper, pen, and ink on the lid of this box. The luminous currents now centred around the pen, which was immediately taken up and dipped in the ink, and without the application of any other force or instrument, so far as I could perceive, the pen was made to move across the paper, and a communication was made which I have since learned was in the Hebrew language. This information I received from Professor Bush, to whom the writings were submitted for translation, and whose letter addressed to you will accompany this statement. Soon after three o'clock my new companions left me as they had done the previous night, taking the box with them. During the time they were in my apartment I was in possession of my natural senses, and not only saw *them*, but the furniture in the room, by means of the illumination which their presence caused; and I also heard the clock strike and carriages passing in the street."

In a later letter, dated August, 1852,[1] Fowler adds some particulars about other writings. Another piece of Hebrew was written in his room at three o'clock in the afternoon (date not stated), he having been previously requested by the spirits to leave the room for that purpose. This piece of Hebrew, like the other, was a quotation from the Old Testament. Again, returning one day in the middle of December, 1851, to his room, about three o'clock p.m., he found upon his table "written upon a sheet of drawing-paper which was incidentally left" there, the legend, "Peace, but not without Freedom," followed by the autographs of forty-three spirits. Subsequently, according to a statement signed on the 25th December, 1851,

[1] Published in Richmond and Brittan's *Discussion*, p. 12. A much fuller account, by Fowler, is given in the Appendix to Edmonds' and Dexter's *Spiritualism*, vol. i. pp. 443-51.

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by sixteen members of the New York circle,[1] the spirits, owing ostensibly to the omission of any history of the occurrence and the irregular mode in which the signatures of the attesting members of the circle had been affixed to the document, directed the medium to burn it, and undertook to write another. Accordingly, two pieces of parchment were placed on the table in Fowler's bedroom, and on the morning of the 23rd of December, when the medium arose, he found the same legend inscribed on the parchment, together with the signatures of fifty-six spirits, including many of the original signatories of the Declaration of Independence, in their characteristic handwriting. At a meeting held on the 25th December the spirits were asked whether each wrote his own name on the parchment, and answered emphatically, "Yes!" Thus far Mr. Fowler's own letters and the statement drawn up by the circle on the 25th December, 1851. Later, in reply to Dr. Richmond's challenge in the *Discussion*, already referred to, a second and a fuller statement of the circumstances was drawn up and signed by eight witnesses. This later statement, and Brittan's covering letter, are alike undated, but from the dates of the corresponding letters of Richmond, it would appear to have been written in August or September, 1852.[2]

Apart from internal evidence, the authenticity of the writings, it will be seen, depends exclusively on the testimony of the medium, a young medical student with a turn for drawing. It becomes important, then, to scrutinise the character of the writings themselves. A reproduction of the fifty-six spirits' autographs is given at the end of Mrs. Hardinge

[1] Published in No. 9 of the *Spiritual Telegraph*.

[2] *Discussion*, pp. 14–16. It is important to point out certain discrepancies in the evidence.

(1) Fowler, in his own letter of 25th March, 1852, says the spirit signatures were written on the first occasion on a piece of paper "incidentally left" in his room. In both of the statements signed by members of the circle it is expressly said that the paper was placed there by direction of the spirits.

(2) Fowler says the writing was executed on the first occasion in the daytime, but the statement of the 25th December says that it was written upon "in the course of the night." The later statement agrees in this respect with Fowler's own version.

(3) The earlier statement says that the medium awoke "on the morning of the 23rd December," and found the second legend and set of signatures written on the parchment. The later statement says that the writing was executed "during the night of the 23rd December."

The first two of these discrepancies were pointed out by Richmond in the *Discussion*. Brittan, in his reply, only alludes to *one* discrepancy, and without specifying its nature, or attempting to explain it, says that it is only apparent, being due to careless copying on his part. It is clear that he has not even taken the trouble to understand the charge of inaccuracy which he attempts to refute.

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Britten's *Modern American Spiritualism*, and the curious can examine it for themselves. Richmond, a not unsympathetic or unduly sceptical witness, as will be seen in the sequel, could not digest the spiritual autographs. After comparing them carefully with each other and with the originals which they counterfeited, he drew attention to many points of unlikeness with the originals, and to a common family resemblance between themselves, and hinted pretty plainly that they were the work of one hand—and that hand the medium's.[1] The only relevant point in Brittan's reply is that the tremulousness of some of the lines was due, not, as Richmond had suggested, to the slowness of the movement necessary to an unpractised forger, but to the roughness of the parchment.

An examination of the Hebrew writing proves still more illuminating. This had been submitted to the Swedenborgian George Bush, himself an occasional attendant at the circle, who writes of it, as quoted by Brittan in his first letter,[2] that "altogether the specimens are of a very extraordinary character, such as I cannot well convey by any verbal description." The letter then goes on to express Bush's own conviction of the medium's honesty. In replying, Richmond points out that Brittan has omitted one important sentence from Bush's letter, as originally printed in the *Shekinah*, and himself supplies the omission, viz.: "The first of these manuscripts was in Hebrew, containing a few verses from the last chapter of the prophet Daniel. This was correctly written, with the exception of several apparently arbitrary omissions, and one rather violent transposition of a word from an upper to a lower line."[3] Bush does not appear to have carried his analysis further; but Richmond submitted the writing to two or three Hebrew scholars, one of whom, the Rev. W. Carter, a graduate of Yale, enters into details of the errors referred to. Carter points out that it is quite clear that the Hebrew was copied by a person so completely ignorant of the language as not even to know that it is written from right to left. Thus, the quotation begins in the middle of a line; but it is the right half of the line (in Hebrew *the beginning*) which is copied, corresponding to the last part of the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter of *Daniel*, "*and sealed till the time of the end.*" The first part of the next verse, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried," which no doubt made up the left half of the interrupted line, is omitted (except the

[1] *Discussion*, pp. 45 *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19. Bush's letter was originally written at Brittan's request, and published in the *Shekinah*, vol. i. pp. 305–7. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

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word "Many"), and the quotation continues, "*Many but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise.*" In the original Hebrew words equivalent to "shall understand" form the conclusion of this verse. But these words in the "spirit" Hebrew come at the end of the quotation, *i.e.* they have apparently been carried on from the right-hand extremity of the last line but one to the left-hand extremity of the last line. In English, of course, this would leave the order of the words unaffected. In the Hebrew it has the effect of taking the two last words of the tenth verse, and inserting them in the middle of the twelfth verse, making the end of the quotation read, "*Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to days a thousand three shall understand.*"[1]

It is perhaps hardly necessary to consider further these particular instances of spirit-writing. It will be seen that the evidence for their production by spirits rests ultimately on the testimony of one man—the medium; that the witnesses who have recorded the circumstances, and vouch for the medium's trustworthiness, are so little concerned to be accurate that several discrepancies may be detected even in the scanty records which they have published; that the Spiritualist champion cannot see these discrepancies when they are pointed out to him; that in quoting the testimony of his own Spiritualist expert he suppresses (no doubt in perfect good faith) the only passage which is calculated to damage his cause; that this Spiritualist expert, though admittedly a competent Hebrew scholar, is unable to appreciate the real significance of the mistakes which he points out; and finally, that the claim of spirit authorship derives but questionable support from an examination of the writings themselves.

That these deficiencies in the evidence were not conspicuous to the Spiritualists may be inferred from Brittan's conclusion on the matter in his controversy with Richmond:—

"I leave this part of my subject with a single additional remark. If it be difficult to convince sane men that spirits wrote that parchment, the reason will be found to consist in their obstinate scepticism rather than in any defect in the testimony."[2]

But Richmond was critical of the phenomena only when, as in the case last considered, their authenticity seemed to involve the Spiritualist interpretation. In all other cases he

[1] A corresponding analysis of the errors in the Hebrew quotation, by Professor Vail, of Concord, together with a facsimile of the quotation, is published in Mattison's *Spirit-Rapping Unveiled*, pp. 118–20.

[2] *Discussion*, p. 19.

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shows himself fully as hospitable to new marvels as his opponent in the argument. It is Richmond who first introduces the famous Ashtabula Poltergeist, which he uses to support his own view of the electro-odylic origin of the manifestations. Richmond's own account of this case was based mainly on oral evidence from two of the witnesses, Miss Martha Cowles and Mrs. Rachel Cowles, with whom he had a long-standing acquaintance. Later, Brittan procured an exhaustive history of the case from Mr. L. M. Austin, of Austinburg, Ashtabula County, Ohio, which is countersigned by Richmond's two informants and five other persons.

Mr. Austin, dating his letter on the 4th February, 1853, begins characteristically by acknowledging Brittan's letter of the 19th *instant*, and then proceeds to tell the following story:—

A young widow, H., after the sudden death of her husband, came to reside with a neighbour in Austinburg, Mr. S. M. Cowles. Soon after her arrival she became a rapping medium. Later she went to Marlborough to study anatomy, and on her return to Austinburg in the autumn of 1851 told a weird story of various uncanny manifestations which had attended her during her recent studies. Shortly after similar disturbances broke out, in H.'s presence, in the Cowles' house. The stair-rods jumped up and followed H. when she went up to the bedroom. When she and her friend were in bed, in the dark, muskets, cartridge belts, candlesticks, and other objects came from all quarters and piled themselves in the middle of the room; tables moved; spirit raps were heard; washstands and chairs started from their places when H. came into a room; pillows, brushes, boots, and other light articles flew around. At Marlborough, when she resumed her anatomical studies, the manifestations were still more outrageous. One night H. and her room mate, alarmed by the most frightful sounds, 'beheld standing by their bedside the spectre of the corpse that they had been dissecting, all reeking and ghastly, as they had left it on the table, save that one of the arms was folded across the breast—a change which was actually found to have taken place when the remains were examined.' On another night H.'s brother, at her entreaty, came to the side of the bed where H. and her friend lay, 'and saw by the moonlight a human skull dancing up and down over their heads.'

Such, in brief, was the story. The account, it will be observed, is dated February, 1853, and the disturbances which the witnesses attest took place in the autumn of 1851. Moreover, not one of the eight signatories appears actually to have seen anything remarkable. Most of the movements

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took place in the dark, or when H. was alone, or were witnessed by visitors to the house whose attestation is not given. No single incident is so described as to make it clear that anyone who signed the account professed to have ever seen anything in the act of moving. The disturbances at Marlborough rest upon H.'s word alone.

But Richmond is quite as ready to accept the phenomena as Brittan himself. The stair-rods, muskets, and candlesticks, he explains, moved from their place because they were attracted by the magneto-odylic energy radiating from H. He adds some details (gathered, as he alleged, in conversation) which the signed account does not give, viz. that a glass tumbler, a watch with crystal glass, and a scent-bottle were not moved, owing, no doubt, as he points out, to glass not being susceptible to the magneto-odylic attraction. A pillow charged with the same force was projected *towards* a person who was badly frightened, and therefore negative. The chairs, tables, etc., moved in the wake of H. as she passed through a room, under the combined force of "electrical vacuum" and odylic attraction. The phenomena took place mostly in the dark, because light interferes with the evolution of this subtle force, and were most violent at Marlborough, because the emanations from the dead bodies in the dissecting room reinforced the odylic energies proceeding from the medium.

Lastly, the vision of the dead body was a vision only, emanating by odylo-cerebral sympathy from the brain of the doctor, who had altered the position of the corpse after the ladies had left the laboratory.[1]

There were some manifestations at this time which, though apparently of rare occurrence, created a profound and lasting impression on all who witnessed them, and are constantly referred to in the early books and discussions. One of them was the phenomenon of human levitation; another, of a table tilting at an extreme angle, without the objects resting on it falling off. The most circumstantial account which I have come across of the latter manifestation is contained in a communication made by Dr. R. T. Hallock at a meeting of the New York Conference on June 18th, 1852. As Dr. Hallock was himself the Secretary of the Conference, it may be presumed that the account preserved in the minutes, and quoted therefrom in the *Spiritual Telegraph*, is accurate. The sitting took place on June 11th at the house of Mr. Partridge, and the medium was one Daniel D. Hume (Home),

[1] *Discussion*, pp. 89–91, 262–72, etc., etc.

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then at the beginning of his distinguished career. There were seven sitters:—

"On the table round which we were seated were loose papers, a lead pencil, two candles,[1] and a glass of water. The table was used by the spirits in responding to our questions, and the first peculiarity we observed was, that, however violently the table moved, everything on it retained its position. The table, which was mahogany and perfectly smooth, was elevated to an angle of about 30 degrees, and held there, with everything on it remaining as before. It was truly surprising to see a lead pencil retaining a position of perfect rest on a polished surface inclined at such an angle. It remained as if glued to the table, and so of everything else on it. The table was repeatedly made to resume its ordinary position and then its inclination as before, as if to fasten on us the conviction that what we saw was no deception of the senses, but a veritable manifestation of spirit presence and of spirit power. They were then requested to elevate the table to the same angle as before, and to detach the pencil, retaining everything else in precise position. This was complied with. The table was elevated, the pencil rolled off and everything else remained. They were then asked to repeat the experiment, retaining the pencil and everything else upon the table stationary, except the glass tumbler, and to let that slide off. This also was assented to, all the articles retained their position but the tumbler, which slid off and was caught in the hands of one of the party as it fell from the lower edge of the table."[2]

At another séance with the same medium a witness relates that he stood upon a table which canted to an angle of forty-five degrees without throwing him off.[3]

But unquestionably the most striking manifestation of spirit power was the levitation of the human body. This particular marvel was vouchsafed at a very early period of the movement. Even in February, 1851, Sunderland writes in the *Spirit World*:[4] "We have been assured by eye-witnesses that Mr. Gordon has been taken up, and his body moved some distance, entirely by spiritual hands."

About a year later, at the house of Dr. Gray, in New York, the same medium is said to have been carried through the air a distance of sixty feet.[5] From Mr. Isaac Rehn, President of the Harmonial Society of Philadelphia, we have a detailed account, written in 1855, of a similar performance with the

[1] It is not stated that the candles were lighted.

[2] Quoted in Brittan and Richmond, *Discussion*, pp. 249–50; also in *Sights and Sounds*, pp. 316–8. This feat is further considered in Book IV. chap. iii. below.

[3] *Sights and Sounds*, p. 128. [4] Vol. ii. p. 62.

[5] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii. p. 198, vol. v. p. 195, etc. Brittan and Richmond, *Discussion*, p. 248. Capron, *Modern Spiritualism*, etc., p. 189.

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same medium. The incident is said to have taken place "some two years since."

"About the same time a company of persons, whose names, as far as I can recollect, I shall mention, were seated around two tables, joined together, in order to furnish room sufficient to seat the party. The house in which I then lived had two parlours, with folding doors. The two tables referred to occupied the entire length of the front parlour, leaving barely room enough for the chairs at the front end of the room; the other end of the table extended quite to the folding doors, leaving, of course, no passage on either end. It so happened that I was seated at that end of the table projecting into the doorway. The medium, Mr. Gordon, was seated about midway of the tables, on the left, the other seats being occupied by the rest of the company.

"After a variety of manifestations had occurred, the medium was raised from his seat by an invisible power, and, after some apparent resistance on his part, was carried through the doorway between the parlours, directly over my head, and his head being bumped along the ceiling, he passed to the further end of the back room, in which there was no one beside himself.

"Although all the individuals present had not equally good opportunity of ascertaining the facts in this case, the room having been somewhat darkened, still his transit over the end of the table at which I was seated, and the utter impossibility of the medium passing out in other way than over our heads, his continued conversation while thus suspended, and his position, as indicated by the sound, with other facts in the case, leave no reasonable doubt of the performance of the feat."[1]

D. D. Hume figured in another widely celebrated case of the kind. A correspondent of Spicer's, in Boston, thus describes the occurrence, from report:—

"One evening a unanimous request was preferred that the spirits would afford the party assembled some irrefragable evidence of their actual presence. To the utter amazement, as you may suppose, of the entire circle—prepared, as they doubtless were, for something strange—the medium was, on the instant, *lifted into the air, and there suspended by invisible agency for a space of two or three minutes, without touching anything or anybody present.*"[2]

This is the account of the incident as given by Brittan:—[3]

"On the 8th of August, 1852, several gentlemen were assembled at the residence of Ward Cheney, Esq., Manchester, Conn., where in

[1] Hare, *op. cit.*, pp. 291, 292. [2] *Sights and Sounds*, p. 131.
[3] Brittan and Richmond, *Discussion*, p. 248.

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the course of the evening very remarkable demonstrations occurred. One of the editors of the *Hartford Times* was present, and from his account of the exhibition, as published in that paper, I cut the following paragraph :—

"'Suddenly, and without any expectation on the part of the company, the medium, Mr. Hume, was taken up in the air! I had hold of his hand at the time, and I felt of his feet—they were lifted a foot from the floor! He palpitated from head to foot with the contending emotions of joy and fear which choked his utterance. Again and again he was taken from the floor, and the third time he was carried to the ceiling of the apartment, with which his hands and feet came in gentle contact. I felt the distance from the soles of his boots to the floor, and it was nearly three feet! Others touched his feet to satisfy themselves.'"

Neither Brittan nor the anonymous Bostonian thought it necessary to mention that some time previously to the supreme manifestation the company had adjourned to a darkened room, ostensibly that they might see the "spiritual flashes of light said to have been vouchsafed to other investigators."[1] They saw apparently nothing, but they heard plenty of raps, and some of them felt Mr. Hume's boots.

But no account of this marvellous form of manifestation would be complete without Dr. Hallock's testimony to what he witnessed at Philadelphia. At one of the meetings of the New York Conference,

"Dr. Hallock stated that on the previous Sunday afternoon (in the course of his lecture) while, as he believed, every eye and all thoughts were directed towards him [*i.e.*, Dr. Hallock, the lecturer], Mr. Henry Gordon, the well-known physical medium, who then sat at some distance from, but in front of him, in the perfectly well-lighted room, rose in the air, without any human aid, till the speaker beheld him floating so high that his feet just grazed the top of the seat, above which he hung in the air, where he swayed about from side to side, and turned partly around. By this time the attention of the entire congregation was rivetted on him, when he sank to the ground. The manifestation was imperfect on the part of the power that lifted him up, because it was afterwards declared by the spirits that they intended to have carried him over the heads of the entire congregation, and landed him on the rostrum, had the conditions permitted; but it seemed that the intense astonishment and agitation of the audience had broken the conditions of passivity necessary for the fulfilment of their design, and so he sank suddenly to the ground. Still, there remained the phenomenon of

[1] *Sights and Sounds*, p. 129.

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his having been lifted up and suspended in the air without mortal aid; in fact, in a manner which no mortal could have achieved. . . . The effect of this marvellous operation of spirits in a crowded assembly and the full light of day, instead of distracting the attention of the audience from the address, intensified it to the utmost degree. 'I think I may say,' added Dr. Hallock, 'that I never was in an assembly where so much serene joy and spiritual exaltation was manifested. Each one felt that it was good to be there. I cannot describe that Pentecostal scene in words.'"

I have not come across the testimony of any member of the audience who, according to Hallock, were witnesses with him of this marvellous sight, nor any other reference to the incident in the literature of Spiritualism.[1]

But of all the wonders of the time, few perhaps excited greater interest, or are more liberally attested, than the performances in Koons' "spirit-room." Jonathan Koons was a farmer living in a remote and mountainous district in the township of Dover, Athens County, Ohio. Early in 1852 he became interested in the Spiritualist movement, and it was revealed to him at a séance that all his eight children, and himself in a supereminent degree, were mediums for the spiritual forces. Thereafter, by direction of the spirits, he built, a few feet from his own house, a log building of one room, sixteen feet by twelve, to be used exclusively for spirit manifestations. The room was furnished with a spirit table and rack, supporting drums, triangles, tambourines, and other instruments of music, with a certain visible arrangement of wires, nowhere, so far as I can ascertain, precisely described, attached to some of the instruments, and having suspended from it bells, plates of copper cut into the shape of birds, and other objects. The mediums —generally Mr. Koons and his eldest son Nahum, a youth of eighteen, accompanied occasionally by other members of the family—sat at a smaller table in contact with the "spirit table"; the sitters, to the number of twenty or more, sat on benches beyond—*i.e.* the mediums were between the circle and the spirit table. Phosphorus was placed ready in wet paper for the spirits to show themselves by. Doors and windows were then closed, so as to exclude the light, the candle was put out; Mr. Koons began to play the fiddle, and the spirits responded with a concert, in which another

[1] Quoted in *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 279. The most probable explanation of this extraordinary statement is that Hallock suffered a hallucination, of sight at the time, or of memory in the retrospect. See below, Book IV. chap. iv.

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fiddle, the drums, a guitar, banjo, accordion, French harp, the horn, tea bell, triangle, tambourine, etc., played their parts. Most of the witnesses appear to have been impressed more by the energy than the excellence of the resulting harmony; more than one tells us with pride that the strains could be heard a mile off. But the music is sometimes described as exquisitely beautiful, or even seraphic; occasionally a choir of angel voices would join in, but the words of the song were rarely articulate. The leading spirit would subsequently address the company, using for the purpose a horn or trumpet to speak through. Of the other manifestations the following extract gives a fair idea:—

"Mr. Koons then said, 'King, it is very warm here; won't you take Mrs. Gage's fan and fan us?' But before he had finished speaking, the tambourine began to fly around the room like lightning, breathing a strong current of wind and fanning all in the house. Then the phosphorus was taken up and darted around the room like flakes of lightning, and a hand began to develop. We talked with the voice while this process was going on, and tried to urge our spirit friends to write a communication for us. When the hand was formed, it passed around the room and shook hands or touched the hands of many of us. It took hold of my hand, and then of my wife's. We both felt the shape of a hand distinctly. It then got some paper and a pencil, and laying the paper on the table, right in front of us, began to write with great rapidity, covered one side of the sheet, turned it over again, wrote five lines, signed it, filled the rest of the page with flourishes, folded it, and placed it in my wife's hand. It then flew around the room, darting from the table up to the ceiling, there making three or four distinct knocks, and darting down and up, repeating the knocks a number of times in succession; it then passed all around the room, stopping and showing the hand to all that wanted to see it. It then commenced darting around the room again, and snapping its fingers as loud as a man could do. It then threw the phosphorus in the back corner of the room, said 'Good night,' and was gone. Mr. Koons then lighted the candle, and my wife read the paper which was given her by the spirit hand."

An extract from the message written under these conditions may perhaps be of interest. The presiding spirit had been urged, by way of a test, to give the sitters, some of whom had come from a distance to consult him, the names of their deceased relatives personally present, as was commonly done by the rapping mediums. He thus excuses himself:—

"On entering the assembly, he [the presiding spirit] looks around upon his anxious inquirers, and sees them attended with their re-

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spective safeguards, such as he never saw before. In the discharge of his official duty, however, he is necessitated to exclude himself from the direct view and intercourse of the safeguards, so as to be brought into a nearer relation to the corresponding parties. The interlocution accordingly takes place, when each one in turn begins to interrogate the speaker in his excluded position, on subjects relating to their excluded guard, of which the speaker knows but little or nothing, except the cognition of their presence on his arrival; and in order to acquaint himself with the circumstances and matters inquired after, so as to answer correctly, the speaker has to disencumber himself at every inquiry, and not only so, but would also fail to perform his *devolved* duty by submitting himself to the scrutiny and criticism of the corresponding parties."[1]

It should be added that the spirits by whom these manifestations were produced purported to be a spirit band of pre-Adamite men one hundred and sixty-five in number, of exceeding power and wisdom, bearing the generic name of King. It was from this circle, indeed, that the celebrated John King and his scarcely less famous daughter Katie, beloved of two generations of Spiritualists throughout the breadth of two continents, are said to be lineally descended.

These performances appear to have been accepted by the Spiritualists with the same whole-hearted faith as any of the other manifestations described in this chapter. Hare devotes several pages of his book to discussing the evidence; so at a later date does Mrs. Hardinge Britten;[2] the *Spiritual Telegraph*[3] from the commencement of the phenomena admitted letters and articles from enthusiastic correspondents describing the marvels; and, finally, one of its editors, Charles Partridge, in May, 1855, went to Dover township, had several sittings, and recorded his experiences in a letter of some length in its columns.[4]

There were other physical manifestations at this date which time would fail me to recount: spirit-writing on slates; writing in raised red lines on the bare arm or forehead; formation of spirit hands—this last a prominent feature of D. D. Hume's séances;[5] miraculous materialisation of

[1] Letter from Mr. John Gage to Professor Hare, quoted in Hare's book, already cited, pp. 300, 301.

[2] *Modern American Spiritualism*, pp. 307–33.

[3] See *e.g. Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. p. 424; vol. iii. pp. 267, 352; vol. vi. p. 132; vol. vii. p. 248, etc.

[4] In du Potet's book, *Traité complet du Magnétisme Animal* (Paris, 1856), a detailed account is given of a sitting with the Koons family by Dr. J. Barthet. On this occasion, in compliment to the nationality of the visitor, one of the written messages contained four words in French (*op. cit.*, p. 517, etc.).

[5] See *e.g. Telegraph Papers*, vol. viii. p. 293.

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spiritual ointment;[1] the fire ordeal;[2] spirit lights; apports of objects, and so on. Indeed, there is but one conspicuous manifestation of present-day Spiritualism which could not be paralleled from the records of 1850–5—the "materialisation" of a complete human form. There were, indeed, as we have seen, materialised hands, and some Spiritualists, like Dr. Gray, contended that the spirits habitually created temporary physical organisations, to enable them to deal with material objects. Others held, with Brittan, that the facts so far adduced hardly warranted such a hypothesis. One writer, indeed, Professor Mapes (Phœnix), discoursed learnedly on the means by which the semblance of such temporary organisms could be produced, in accordance with the kinetic theory of gases, with a minimum employment of actual material particles, provided a sufficiently intense energy of motion were imparted to them.[3] But, at any rate, these hypothetical organisations, with the single exception of the hand, had so far apparently been perceptible to the sense of touch alone.

To quote further specimens of the evidence for physical phenomena could hardly serve any useful purpose. The foregoing extracts afford sufficient examples of the best evidence which the most competent and distinguished Spiritualists of the time could offer for their belief, so far as it was based on purely material marvels. To the reader of to-day the mere statement of such belief on such grounds may well appear preposterous. Logical grounds for the belief—as logic is understood in the modern world—were clearly wanting. But the matter should not on that account be summarily dismissed, as a pale recrudescence of mediæval superstition. For which of us is in better case? The causes of belief in the last analysis are not logical. It should not be overlooked that, in the present instance, the men who believed, if not of high intellectual distinction, had at least proved themselves capable, and had won more or less reputation amongst their fellow-citizens, as merchants, preachers, University professors, physicians, lawyers, legislators, and men of science; that many of them had embraced such belief when still in the prime of life and the ripeness of their judgment; that the same beliefs are held by a large number of persons even at the present day. We may feel assured

[1] *Supramundane Facts*, etc., p. 129, edited by T. L. Nichols. London, 1865.
[2] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii. p. 451; vol. iii. p. 189. *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 205.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. vii. pp. 117, 149, 185, etc.

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that in one form or another the belief in such marvels, as it has revived again and again in the past, will manifest itself again and again in generations to come; and history shows that those who sneer at such credulity without attempting to understand its causes are perhaps themselves not the least likely to fall victims, precisely because they do not understand.

Some further light will be thrown upon these causes during the consideration, in the next two chapters, of trance utterances and other psychological phenomena. But one remark may be made at this point. However large a part the personal craving for assurance of a future life may have played in predisposing the average Spiritualist to accept the phenomena as genuine, it is clear that this was not the only, perhaps not even the chief cause of belief. The whole history of Animal Magnetism in France and of Mesmerism in England testifies to the contrary; and for further proof we have the curious fact that men like Mahan, Richmond, and Rogers, who rejected the Spiritualistic interpretation, gave as blind a faith to most of the alleged marvels as any Spiritualist of them all. To champion the cause of truth disinherited is always an attractive part; so attractive that many men are too little careful to scrutinise the title of each pretender to the inheritance.

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CHAPTER IV

CLAIRVOYANCE AND SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

WHEN we turn to the psychological phenomena we find that the records of this period add little or nothing to the evidence already furnished by the Mesmerists for the operation of some special faculty of clairvoyance, or thought-transmission. Not, indeed, but that the Spiritualists of the time firmly believed in the existence of such a faculty, as in some cases an alternative explanation to communication with spirits through the organism of the medium, and held that they had themselves received abundant proofs of its operation. That the medium should answer mental questions, and give information concerning friends long dead and private family matters, was indeed so common an occurrence that Edmonds and others excuse themselves from the superfluous task of furnishing evidence in detail. When, however, details are given, we find as an almost invariable rule that the information came through the raps, and there can be no reasonable doubt that in such cases the real explanation of the mystery lies in the cunning and keen observation of the medium.

It is, indeed, a striking confirmation of this view that, though writing mediumship was quite common at a very early date in the history of the movement, it was only by exception—an exception of the rarest occurrence—that a medium undertook to reply in writing to a question of which the answer was presumably unknown to him.[1] There was no obvious reason for this curious reserve, since the communicating intelligences were wont to be voluble enough on

[1] Two cases are quoted by Mrs. Hardinge Britten (*History of Modern American Spiritualism*). In the first (p. 224) the medium *wrote* out a copy of the first of a list of questions, but asked that the others should be answered by the raps. The other case (p. 257) is second-hand, and is open to other evidential objections.

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all other matters, in heaven or elsewhere, and when speaking through the mouth or writing through the hands of their own relatives, to whom the facts would be known, no such reticence was observed. The inference is irresistible that what the medium did not know the "spirit" could not tell.

There are, indeed, a few instances at this time, which were widely advertised and recorded with all due circumstance, of mental telegraphy at séances. But for the success of this form of mental telegraphy it appeared to be essential to have a professional medium at each end of the wire. The earliest recorded instance of this kind is found in Capron and Barron's *History*.[1]

On the 12th February, 1850, Mrs. Draper, of Rochester, had in the trance an interview with Benjamin Franklin, who gave her, as a test, a violent electric shock, by which her body was visibly shaken, and undertook in a few days to provide an illustration of spiritual telegraphy. The first attempt, three days later, met with only partial success. An appointment was, however, made for the following Wednesday.

"On the day appointed, February 20th, the above-named persons convened; some of the company were late, and as soon as order was observed, the question was asked, 'What are the directions of Benjamin Franklin?' *A.* 'Hurry; first magnetise Mrs. Draper.' This was done, she immediately saying, 'He says we are behind the time, but he will forgive us this time; we must do better in the future.' The company was divided as follows: Mr. Jervis, Mr. Jones, Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Brown, Catharine Fox, in a retired room, with two closed doors between them. Mrs. Draper, Mrs. Jervis, Mr. Draper, Mr. Willetts, and Margaretta Fox remained in the parlor. Sounds unusually loud were heard in each room by either company, as before, resembling the telegraphic sounds. They were so unusual that Miss Fox became alarmed, and said, 'What does all this mean?' Mrs. Draper, while her countenance was irradiated with animation, replied, 'He is trying the batteries.' Soon there was the signal for the alphabet, and the following communication was spelled to the company in the parlor: 'Now I am ready, my friends. There will be great changes in the nineteenth century. Things that now look dark and mysterious to you will be laid plain before your sight. Mysteries are going to be revealed. The world will be enlightened. I sign my name, Benjamin Franklin. Do not go into the other room.'

"After waiting a few minutes, Mr. Jervis came into the parlor, saying that he was directed by the sounds to come and compare notes. They read as follows: *Q.* 'Are you all right?' Answered affirmatively; signal for alphabet, and the following was spelled:

[1] Pages 94, 95.

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'There will be great changes in the nineteenth century. Things that now look dark and mysterious to you will be laid plain before your sight. Mysteries are going to be revealed. The world will be enlightened. I sign my name, Benjamin Franklin. Go in the parlor and compare notes.' Mr. Jervis returned to his company, and by alphabet was spelled, 'Now all go into the parlor.' The notes were then compared in presence of the whole company. *Q.* 'Is there anything more from Dr. Franklin?' *A.* 'I think I have given tests enough for this day.' *Q.* 'Will it not be better to keep this matter private?' *A.* 'No; it should be published.' *Q.* 'In what paper?' *A.* 'In *Democrat* or *Magnet*.'"

Later this form of telegraphy without wires became comparatively common; messages were exchanged between New York and Philadelphia, Baltimore and Pittsburgh, New York and Washington, and so on. Professional mediums were always present at each end of the line; the most effective batteries being Messrs. Gordon, Conklin, Whitney, Mrs. French, and Mrs. Long.[1] There were numerous other instances of spurious clairvoyance, always through professional mediums, including the pellet test, which need not be further discussed at present.[2]

But when we turn from the phenomena of the séance-room to instances of a less obviously manufactured kind, we find a marked deterioration in the quality of the evidence. The records of the first class are unimpeachable. We can have no reasonable doubt that identical messages were given to the expectant circles in Mrs. Draper's house at Rochester, though we may hesitate to credit the results either to Franklin or to thought-transference. But in other cases the attestation is of the most slovenly and inadequate character. When, for instance, Judge Edmonds tells us that his friends in New York were clairvoyantly informed of his doings on a voyage, we can only regret that the judge's legal training did not suggest to him the need for substantiating this statement by furnishing extracts from his own diary and the minutes of the circle; and that the clairvoyant did not catch a glimpse of him when he was engaged in some less readily conjecturable occupation than talking about Spiritualism.[3] When Mr. Jarvis, a Methodist clergyman, narrates that his friend Pickard received the news of the death of his child, and

[1] Hare, *op. cit.*, p. 294; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. pp. 79, 80, 447; vol. vi. p. 447.

[2] See *e.g. Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii., pp. 101, 140; vol. v. p. 400. *Modern American Spiritualism*, pp. 172, 191, 193, 201, 252, etc.

[3] *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, p. 30.

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actually started on his homeward journey, before the arrival of the annunciatory telegram, we again note the unfortunate omission from Mr. Jarvis' letter (itself undated) of precise hours and other particulars, and the absence of any account from the person chiefly concerned.[1] Or, once more, in the account given, apparently in entire good faith, by Mr. Willetts, one of the early Quaker converts, of two or three instances where excellent advice was given him by spirits in business matters, exhibiting apparently superhuman knowledge of the motives and future actions of third persons, we again note with regret that Mr. Willetts did not think it necessary to date his communication nor to offer any corroborative testimony.[2] Not less striking than the poor quality of the evidence actually forthcoming in such cases is the paucity of the records. The same examples—as was noted by Mahan and other early critics—are quoted over and over again by writers and lecturers on the subject. Even Mrs. Hardinge Britten, the later historian of the movement, whilst explaining that she is embarrassed in her selection by the wealth of the material at hand, including over two hundred narratives in her own possession, contents herself with quoting as examples of this early time the three narratives here referred to from Capron and Barron's book and one other.[3]

In nearly all cases we find that the Brother, Wife, or Child who purported to communicate through the medium—when raps were not the vehicle of conversation—seems to have been taken on trust. There are hardly any detailed accounts of actual proof of their claim being asked for or furnished; whilst, on the other hand, there are several cases recorded where a dead relative or friend greeted the anxious inquirer, and furnished circumstantial proofs of decease, who was afterwards found alive and well. In one case, acting upon information received through the medium, the dead man's relatives dug for his body in a swamp, and after an arduous and unsuccessful search, learnt that the murdered man was sawing lumber in the next county.[4]

[1] Capron and Barron, *History*, pp. 38, 39. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 50–3.

[3] *Modern American Spiritualism*, pp. 47–55. Other instances of alleged clairvoyance, thought-transference, etc., at this time will be found in Capron and Barron, *op. cit.*, p. 54; Asa Mahan, *Modern Mysteries*, etc., pp. 227, 228; Adin Ballou, *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, pp. 82, 112; Spicer, *Sights and Sounds*, p. 307, etc.; in the Prefaces and Appendices to Edmonds and Dexter's *Spiritualism*; in Mrs. Hardinge Britten's *History*, pp. 136–40, 253; Richmond and Brittan's *Discussion*, pp. 198, etc.; and in the *Spiritual Telegraph*.

[4] *Spirit World*, vol. iii., p. 38; see also *ibid.*, pp. 36, 37; Asa Mahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 176, 177, etc., etc.

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There are a few cases, however, which excited considerable notoriety, of a spirit furnishing detailed evidence of his identity. Probably the best-known case is that of John Chamberlain. At a circle held in Waterford, N.Y., on the 5th and 6th March, 1853, there communicated, through the mediumship of Mr. John Proper, one John Chamberlain, who claimed to have fought in the Revolutionary War, to have frequently seen Washington, and to have died at Point Pleasant, New Jersey, on the 15th January, 1847. Further, he said that he had been the father of eleven children. The postmaster of Point Pleasant was applied to, and all these details (except the having seen Washington) were found to be correct. The case was looked upon at the time as a remarkable proof of spirit identity: and John Chamberlain may perhaps be regarded as the prototype of Abraham Florentine, who communicated some twenty years later through the Rev. W. Stainton Moses. It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out that the evidence, in the earlier case as in the later, depends primarily on the good faith of the medium. And even if we could be satisfied of the good faith, it would be almost impossible to exclude the possibility that a latent memory might have been revived in the trance.[1]

There is, however, one case recorded at this time to which it is more difficult to apply this explanation. On the 5th of August, 1854, there died at St. Louis one O. F. Parker. On the following day, at Maryville, Kentucky, Mrs. Ferguson, wife of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson, gave automatically—orally, it would seem, though this is not expressly stated—a long communication purporting to be addressed by O. F. Parker to Mr. Ferguson, who was his cousin and close friend. As proof of identity, he referred, in the first place, to a conversation between them some time before on a peculiarly intimate matter. The writing then went on:—

"But you shall have other evidence. My books I ordered to be sold to defray my funeral expenses; but it was not done. I am afraid, too, that there will be some flaw picked in my life policy, and, if so, I wish you to order my books to be sold to pay my debts, and if they fail, do not fail from any delicacy of feeling to write to my mother, and she will have all properly settled. The policy now is in the hands of Mr. Hitchcock.

"To show you further that I am he, I will remind you of the bill you paid Mr. Hough. The medium, I know and you know, knows nothing of that. I disliked, in your condition, pressed as I knew

[1] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. pp. 69, 70. Capron, *Facts and Fanaticisms*, pp. 284-7. For other cases, see *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. p. 302; vol. v. p. 138.

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you were with your own obligations, to have you add that to your many kindnesses. You must pay yourself."

Other matters were also referred to, and there were interspersed reflections and exhortations of a general kind.

Mr. Ferguson thus comments on the communication :—

"Truth and candour require me to state that the evidence of identity presented by the above communication was overwhelming. At the time it was received the only account we had respecting his death was a brief telegraphic despatch. We have since had every particular confirmed . . . His life policy to which he refers was, from some neglect, without an endorsement of the payment of his premiums, which fact was not known to any of us till six weeks after his death. It was allowed, however, by the generous justice of the company, without difficulty, and without the knowledge on their part of this fact.

"At the time Mr. P. gave us the spiritual communication I supposed the policy to be in the hands of Mr. W. Meriwether, of Kentucky, for whose security it was issued. In the last conversation with respect to it with Mr. P. in life, he informed me it was his intention to leave it with Mr. M., and on his way to St. Louis he stopped in Kentucky for that purpose. I mention these facts and leave them to make their impression, which no honest man can resist.

"It should also be stated that at the same moment, upon my return to Nashville from Kentucky, where the above was received, some eleven days after the death of Mr. P., when I handed it to Mr. M. C. C. Church, he handed me letters from St. Louis detailing the circumstances of Mr. P.'s death and the state of his effects, confirming the particulars given from the spirit world. Of course, no language could express our gratification at the incontrovertible evidence of the reality of our intercourse with the spirit of our worthy relative. There are no less than *eleven distinct particulars* stated in the communication, which could not have been stated under the circumstances by any other than the spirit of our cousin friend."[1]

It would, of course, have been more satisfactory if Mrs. Ferguson's version of the incident had also been forthcoming, and if it could have been made quite clear that she, in her normal state, had no knowledge of the dead man's affairs. But even as it stands the narrative is of considerable interest, and is certainly one of the most detailed and best-authenticated cases of the time. Ferguson gives other

[1] *Spirit Communion: a Record of Communications from the Spirit Sphere*, etc., pp. 41–8. By J. B. Ferguson. Nashville, 1854.

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cases of the kind, some with other mediums, but less striking and insufficiently detailed.[1]

One other class of phenomena which is claimed as furnishing evidence of supernormal knowledge remains to be considered. We find occasionally in the literature of the period accounts of speaking "with tongues," and forced vociferation, which recall the histories of possession amongst various religious sects. What has been already said in a former chapter[2] on the Ursuline Nuns of Loudun, the Tremblers of the Cevennes, and other earlier cases, will help to explain the American outpourings. But the differences are sufficiently marked to justify a detailed examination.

The manifestations amongst the American Spiritualists from 1848 and onward were pitched in a much lower key. There were, as a rule, no convulsions, rigidity, or insensibility, such as we find amongst some of the more extreme cases, even in Irving's congregation. But there seems no reason to doubt that the phenomena, when not deliberately counterfeited by professional mediums, were of the same type; that the utterance was unpremeditated and involuntary, and the subject generally in a state of trance or ecstasy. Moreover, the outpourings were often accompanied by dancing and rhythmic gestures which represented, no doubt, the more violent movements of the Nuns of Loudun and the Convulsionaries of St. Medard, and appear occasionally, as in the earlier outbreaks, to have been contagious.

The following account illustrates at once the epidemic nature of the influence, and the tendency of the utterance to assume the form of an "unknown" tongue, at least a tongue presumably unknown to both medium and audience:—

"SPIRITS IN KEOKUK.

"From a letter dated Keokuk, Iowa, March 7th, 1854, signed William Wittinmyer, we are informed that two mediums were developed at circles held on the 28th and 30th of January. One of them was influenced to speak Latin and translate the same into English, to sing in the Swiss language and speak in an Indian tongue, and also to delineate various Indian characteristics. The Indian spirit claimed to be a Chippewa. The other medium was made to deliver an oration on the bad treatment the Indians had received from the white people, after which the spirits, through the two mediums, held an earnest and lengthy oral interview, closing

[1] See also Dr. Dexter's testimony, in his Preface to *Spiritualism* (Edmonds and Dexter), and Rev. A. E. Newton's account of a conversation with his deceased father through a medium, quoted by Hare, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

[2] Book I. chap. i.

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with a majestic anthem, improvising words first in some Indian dialect, then in the English language, praising God for sending messengers to proclaim glad tidings of great joy to the children of men."[1]

There are numerous accounts of similar séances in the literature of the time, but there is rarely any evidence that the "languages" spoken were anything but a succession of meaningless sounds. The next extract, however, introduces a new feature—the writing in tongues.

"The friend who briefly narrates his spiritual experience in the following letter is a clergyman of expanded views and liberal culture:—

"'KEY WEST, *May* 10, 1853.

"'FRIENDS PARTRIDGE AND BRITTAN,—One week ago I commenced writing in my room, alone, with an ease and facility, if possible, far above my usual voluntary writing. Since the first effort I have conversed in writing with a number of spirits of different degrees of intelligence. I have been a medium for the Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish languages. The last-mentioned I am entirely ignorant of. With the other three I have heretofore had some acquaintance.—A. GAGE.'"[2]

Judge Edmonds is the chief source of information on both forms of manifestation. Of his own knowledge he enumerates seven instances, two of them being his daughter and his niece, of whose performances he gives, in a letter dated October 27th, 1857, the following account:—

"On another occasion some Polish gentlemen, entire strangers to her, sought an interview with Laura [Miss Edmonds], and during it she several times spoke in their language words and sentences which she did not understand, but they did; and a good deal of the conversation on their part was in Polish, and they received answers, sometimes in English and sometimes in Polish. The English she understood, but the other she did not, though they seemed to understand it perfectly.

"This can be verified only by Laura's statement, for no one was present but her and the two gentlemen, and they did not give their names.

"The incident with the Greek gentleman was this: One evening, when some twelve or fifteen persons were in my parlor, Mr. E. D. Green, an artist of this city, was shown in, accompanied by a gentleman whom he introduced as Mr. Evangelides, of Greece. He

[1] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. p. 409. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 253.

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spoke broken English, but Greek fluently. Ere long, a spirit spoke to him through Laura, in English, and said so many things to him that he identified him as a friend who had died at his house a few years before, but of whom none of us had ever heard.

"Occasionally, through Laura, the spirit would speak a word or a sentence in Greek, until Mr. E. inquired if he could be understood if he spoke in Greek. The residue of the conversation, for more than an hour, was, on his part, entirely in Greek, and on hers sometimes in Greek and sometimes in English. At times Laura would not understand what was the idea conveyed, either by her or him. At other times she would understand him, though he spoke in Greek, and herself when uttering Greek words.

". . . My niece, of whom I have spoken, has often sung Italian, improvising both words and tune, yet she is entirely unacquainted with the language. Of this, I suppose, there are a hundred instances.

"One day my daughter and niece came into my library and began a conversation with me in Spanish, one speaking a part of a sentence and the other the residue. They were influenced, as I found, by the spirit of a person whom I had known when in Central America, and reference was made to many things which had occurred to me there, of which I knew they were as ignorant as they were of Spanish.

"To this only we three can testify.

"Laura has spoken to me in Indian, in the Chippewa and Monomonie tongues. I knew the language, because I had been two years in the Indian country."[1]

Judge Edmonds, it will be observed, does not say how far his own acquaintance with Spanish or Indian went, nor does he in any instance give examples of the sentences actually spoken, nor any proof of his statement that the two young ladies knew nothing of the languages which they used, nor the dates of any of the incidents, nor any corroboration from the mediums themselves or any other person to support his own unaided memory. We learn, however, from another passage[2] that the conversation with the Greek had taken place some time in 1854, about three years before this, the only detailed account of it which I have seen, was written.

His testimony to a corresponding manifestation with two professional mediums possesses a much higher evidential value, for a contemporary account was preserved in his diary.

"November 3rd, 1852. There was a special meeting of the Circle of Hope last evening, to meet some of our friends from Albany. . . .

[1] See *Letters and Tracts*, pp. 110-12.

[2] *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, vol. ii. p. 45.

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Mr. Ambler was soon thrown into the magnetic state, etc. . . . After he came out of the trance state Mrs. Shepherd was affected, and spoke in several languages. She occasionally spoke English. . . . And she continued for an hour or two thus to speak in some foreign language. It seemed to us to be Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. . . . Mrs. Mettler was then thrown into a trance state, and she was developed for the first time in her life to speak in diverse tongues. She spoke in German, and what seemed to be Indian.

"And they two, *i.e.* Mrs. Shepherd and Mrs. Mettler, then for some time conversed together in these foreign languages.

"Occasionally they spoke in English, and sometimes in broken English."[1]

Edmonds does not say whether he himself knew German, and the identification of the other foreign languages is, it will be seen, left ambiguous.

But besides testifying in his own person, Edmonds, early in 1859, appealed in the *Banner of Light* for evidence of this power, and received nineteen replies, giving in all, on the personal knowledge of the writers, no less than thirty-four cases of persons who occasionally spoke or wrote in the "tongues." Out of these thirty-four cases there are two—and only two—instances in which sentences in a foreign (*i.e.* a *recognised* foreign) language were *written*. In both cases the circumstances were attested by several witnesses, the evidence is recent, and the writings—French, German, Latin, Greek, Gaelic, Chinese, etc.—were preserved and are still open to inspection. The mediums were both professional, viz. A. D. Ruggles, who had acted as medium for Professor Hare, and J. V. Mansfield, who, from his skill in reading and answering sealed letters, left in his custody for that purpose, had earned the title of the "Spirit Postmaster."

The evidence, it will be seen, in these two cases is in most respects unimpeachable; the only point on which the most stiffnecked unbeliever could desire more rigorous proof is on the medium's complete ignorance of the languages written, a point on which the medium himself is of course the only competent witness.

Amongst private mediums there are eight cases recorded (six in one circle), also recent and on fairly good evidence, of sentences being written in languages unknown to the mediums. But these languages were also unknown to the sitters or to anyone else, and had either not been identified at all, or had been identified, on the authority of the spirits

[1] *Letter and Tracts*, p. 219.

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themselves, as dialects spoken in the South Sea Islands or other remote regions.

When we turn to the question of speaking, as distinguished from writing, we find the same characteristics. There is excellent evidence for Mr. Ruggles speaking in French (a language which, according to his own statement, he did not understand); and fairly good evidence for other professional mediums—Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Thompson, Mr. Hersley—speaking in German, French, Indian, and other languages. But the fifteen cases in which mediums who were apparently non-professional are alleged to have spoken in French, German, Italian, Chinese, Indian, or other *recognised* foreign language, include no recent account of the phenomenon. In four of the accounts the date of the occurrence is not given; in the remainder the time ranges from "about a year" to some four years previously. The gift of tongues had not ceased amongst professional mediums when Judge Edmonds issued his appeal, nor amongst private mediums so far as relates to speaking or writing in *unknown* tongues; and it is difficult to resist the suggestion that the absence of any records less than a twelvemonth old amongst private mediums of speech in *foreign* languages was not a mere accident, but that past experiences of this kind "could only win a glory from their being far," and that had Edmonds issued his appeal for evidence in the spring of 1860 instead of the spring of 1859, the year 1858 would have proved as fruitful as any of its immediate predecessors.

Moreover, the evidence, alike for the medium's ignorance in the normal state of the language alleged to have been spoken, and for the identification of the language itself, is extremely defective. Many of the instances are vouched for by persons ignorant of the language, on the authority of other persons, themselves imperfectly acquainted with it, whose first-hand testimony is not given. Two young men are said to have spoken a language which was "recognised by my father and brother as the Chinese, they having been acquainted with many of them in California, but could not speak the language."[1] Other mediums are said to have spoken Italian—"We learned that from a gentleman present, who understood the Italian language partially (I have forgotten the gentleman's name)."[2] Mr. Sizer Barnum's Indian songs were recognised by an aged widow lady who "had lived when young near or among a tribe of Indians in the State of New York."[3]

[1] Page 222. [2] Page 225. [3] Page 244.

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It is curious to note that in many cases the proof of the language being "Indian," etc., is based upon the "interpretation" through the mouth, now of the same, now of another medium, of an unintelligible utterance previously given.[1]

If we turn to the literature of the movement at large, we shall find abundant evidence for similar phenomena, but all pointing in the same direction. Thus a writer in the *North American Review*, April, 1855, relates that a medium of his acquaintance, a lady of "transparent ingenuousness," produced three poems purporting to have been written by the spirit of John Milton. One of these poems was headed "A Latin Sonnet"; it was not a sonnet, nor was it written in Latin, or in any other language; but it had throughout a Latin sound, and the terminations were all Latin. The explanation, no doubt, is to be found, as the reviewer suggests, in the fact that the lady's father had for years prepared young boys for college, and she herself had probably in her youth often heard Latin read aloud. Again, we read that Mr. E. McBride, of Iowa, a converted infidel, received a treatise on the millennium from the spirit of the Rev. W. C. Davis, written in an "unknown tongue," and wrote to the editor of the *Spiritual Telegraph* to ask him where he could get it translated. The editor comments that probably thousands of pages of this kind of spiritual cryptography had been produced in the past two or three years.[2] Tallmadge had seen a lady translating the Old Testament into hieroglyphics, which, the spirits told her, represented the original language in which it was written.[3] Some of these spirit languages were so condensed that *e.g.* the phrase Ki-e-lou-cou-ze-ta required no less than forty-five words to furnish an adequate translation in English.[4]

Sometimes, it may be surmised, though the evidence is insufficient to substantiate such an inference, these later ecstatics may have spoken with fluency in a language with which in their normal state they were imperfectly acquainted, as seems to have been the case with the Tremblers of the

[1] See *Letters and Tracts*, pp. 215–64.
[2] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. p. 422.
[3] *Healing of the Nations*, pp. 59, 60.
[4] Mattison's *Spirit-Rapping Unveiled*, p. 73. For other instances of speaking or writing in tongues, see Nichols, *Supramundane Facts*, pp. 56, 57; Mattison, *op. cit.*, p. 76; Edmonds and Dexter, *Spiritualism*, vol. i. p. 87; Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 388; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. pp. 37, 253, 332; vol. iii. 7, 13, 62, 203; vol. iv. p. 409; vol. vi. pp. 56, 191; Asa Mahan, *Modern Mysteries*, etc., pp. 296 *et seq.*

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Cevennes. But, as a rule, the phenomena appear to have been comparable rather to the speaking with tongues in Edward Irving's congregation — a spontaneous outpouring of articulate but meaningless sounds, at one time producing on the imagination of some hearers the effect of rapid utterance in some language with which they had a rudimentary acquaintance, at another authenticated as the genuine utterance of an unknown tongue by the subsequent interpretation vouchsafed under spirit guidance. The only new element introduced—a complication from which previous outpourings were happily free—is the deliberate fraud of the professional medium.

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CHAPTER V

TRANCE WRITING AND SPEAKING

IF we turn now from counterfeit clairvoyance and speaking with tongues to utterances of a more coherent and normal type, such as were poured forth in abundance at this period at every Spiritualist meeting, we shall find that, in private circles at any rate, it was less the substance of the communications than the manner of their occurrence which impressed the earlier investigators. Whether or not the messages testified to matters outside the medium's knowledge, whether the words were commonplace or sublime, were questions of secondary interest; that the human agent spoke and wrote through a power not his own was patent to all, and was a fact of crucial importance. And here it may be well to emphasise once more a distinction often lost sight of, but nevertheless essential to the right understanding of the Spiritualist position. So far as we have seen, there is no reason to doubt that the whole of the so-called physical phenomena were due to fraud, if not always to preconcerted and fully conscious fraud. We have seen also in at least one notorious case before 1848—the Seeress of Prevorst—that such physical phenomena were associated with examples of clairvoyance and premonition themselves also apparently fraudulent. But taken in the mass there seems as little reason to doubt that the mental phenomena of the trance and of automatism generally were genuine. There were, of course, spurious manifestations of this kind; but the mediums who feigned trance-speaking were probably seldom content to exclude spirit-rapping and other marvels from their repertory. And, indeed, as we have just seen, cases of clairvoyance, mental telegraphy, and speaking with tongues, which are in themselves suspect, are generally connected with persons who have made themselves responsible also for physical manifestations. But the bulk of

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so-called spirit communications, both now and later, were free from the taint of this association. The physical phenomena, indeed, throughout the history of the movement, have been generally the privilege of professional mediums, occasionally of young children, or other persons whose birth, temperament, or circumstances rendered them specially open to the temptation, not necessarily of a pecuniary kind, to enhance their importance in their social environment by fraudulent methods. Physical mediumship amongst adults of good education and recognised social position was fully as rare at the beginning of the movement as it has been throughout its course. On the other hand, many of the best-known of those who have practised inspirational speaking or writing, even professionally, such as Mrs. Hardinge Britten, Mrs. Cora L. V. Tappan-Richmond, Mr. J. J. Morse, have had as little to do with the trickery of the séance-room as any modern University Extension Lecturer.

The commonest form assumed by the automatic impulse (for the manifestations were not necessarily confined to the trance), at any rate amongst educated subjects, was that of speaking or writing in the mother tongue. The descriptions of their own experiences given by various automatists agree that the impulse to speak or write was involuntary, and that, for the most part, the human agent was not conscious of the nature of the message delivered through his organism. In the case of A. J. Davis, and of the mesmeric or "magnetic" subjects generally, this characteristic was, as we have seen, referred to the action of the subject's own intelligence working under altered conditions. But after 1848 it became natural to interpret all such involuntary manifestations of intelligence in the light of the Poltergeist performances, and to refer them to a common cause, the agency of spirits; and the interpretation favoured by those around the automatist inevitably reacted, as we have already seen in the history of Animal Magnetism in France, Germany, and England, on the content of the automatic utterance.

In some cases the impulse to speak did not affect the external organs, but manifested itself merely as an inner voice or mental impression. It was in this manner, as we have seen, that A. J. Davis' later pronouncements were inspired: "I am impressed" is his favourite formula in the *Great Harmonia*. Josiah Gridley was also a medium of this kind. He had, indeed, as we have seen, been the subject of such impressions or angelic interpositions, as he occasionally calls them, throughout his life; and after he had attended

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séances and witnessed automatic utterance in others, his own internal monitor appears to have developed and systematised its instructions. But the inspiration appears not to have been, as a rule, verbal. Thus he writes, as a preface to a short dissertation, "At this time Christ's position in the Universe was as clearly impressed on my inner being as the rays of a midday sun were ever impressed upon my outer being . . . the best I can do at present towards clothing them (*sc.* the truths impressed) the reader will find in what follows."[1] And again, in the course of an explanatory post-script to his work, "It is due to the reader of this work to say, that while the sentiment has been given me in every instance by the spirits, I have often assisted these friends to clothe their sentiments in simple but suitable language."

But this no doubt represents a rudimentary stage of automatic action, hardly perhaps to be distinguished from normal reverie. In some of the more noteworthy instances of more developed automatism there seems no reason to doubt the medium's own account of the matter, that the utterance, whether verbal or written, was involuntary, and for the most part unconscious. Thus Dr. Dexter gives the following account of his own development as a writing automatist. He had attended many séances, and had seen his own little daughter of nine years old controlled to write, apparently under spirit influence. He was not yet, however, convinced of the Spiritualist belief until his own hand was made the instrument of similar communications. The process began late one night when he was sitting alone in his office and felt the right hand and arm fixed tightly to the arm of the chair on which it rested. Afterwards the whole limb trembled violently, and two raps were heard on the wall of the room. Similar experiences recurred again and again, until at length he determined to yield to the influence:—

"When in pursuance of this design I attended circles, my hand was seized and made to write. At first the sentences were short, and contained a single idea, but as I became developed they wrote out many pages, embracing various ideas and subjects. . . . Every meeting, however, at which I was present something new was always developed, and the handwriting of the spirits manifesting assumed peculiar and distinct character, thus identifying the individual who wrote through my hand. The earlier attempts we were hardly able to decipher, but after some practice the writing was rapid, bold, and easily read. From the first essay of the spirits

[1] *Astounding Facts*, etc., p. 162.

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to influence my hand to write, it was the medium by which many, both friends and strangers, communicated with the circle; but when the design was apparent that they had developed me for a special object, my hand was controlled by two spirits, whose names will be found recorded in this book as Sweedenborg (*sic*) and Bacon.

"During the whole time, from their earliest endeavour to write, they have used my hand as the instrument to convey their own thoughts, without any appreciation on my part of either ideas or subject.

"I know nothing of what is written until after it is read to me, and frequently, when asked to read what has been communicated, I have found it utterly impossible to decipher it. Not only is the thought concealed, but after it has been read to me I lose all recollection of the subject, until again my memory is refreshed by the reading."[1]

Now that his powers were fully developed, he continues, the influence often seized him when he was alone, and he would even be awakened from sleep and compelled to write out long communications before retiring to rest again.

Somewhat similar was Mrs. Hardinge Britten's initiation into the mysteries of mediumship. She had attended, as a sceptic, one or two public séances, had been interested in what she had witnessed, and in the stock prediction that she would develop into a remarkable medium. Thereafter she held a few private circles, and, at her next visit to a professional medium, she went off into a trance, impersonated the spirit of an old gentleman, and gave tests on her own account.[2]

But the phenomena of automatic utterance, whether within or without the trance, are sufficiently familiar at the present time to render it unnecessary to labour the point further.

The automatic utterances purported for the most part to be communications from deceased friends or near relatives of the sitters or of some person present, such as are common at Spiritualist séances even at the present day. More rarely the "control" gave himself out to be a stranger, who had been drawn to the circle either to receive help and consolation or to give it—an ignorant newsboy, a repentant drunkard, a bright child-spirit, a murdered man seeking for vengeance, or some uneasy ghost wishing to communicate with friends on earth. Numerous examples of both these types of communication will be found in the works of Edmonds, Dexter, Putnam, Hare, Tallmadge, and other writers from whom I

[1] *Spiritualism*, Edmonds and Dexter, vol. i. p. 93.
[2] See her *History*, pp. 136–40.

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have already quoted. Of their evidential aspect enough has already been said.

But frequently the names attached to the communications claimed to be those of the mighty dead. Hare summoned a convocation of spirit worthies, including Washington, Byron, Isaac Newton, and Benjamin Franklin.[1] Of all the august names which figure in the "inspirational" literature of the period, none, it should be remarked, occurs more frequently, or is made sponsor for more outrageous nonsense, than that of Franklin. Whatever sins of omission may be laid to his charge on the Bailly Commission sixty or seventy years before, the penalty was surely paid in full. Again, Spear's revelations were signed, amongst others, by Franklin, Jefferson, Seneca, Apollos Munn, Plato, and Aristotle.[2] Davis held converse with Franklin, Solon, Swedenborg, St. Paul, and St. John.[3] Harris and Scott, as will appear later, were the chosen instruments of a circle of apostles and prophets at Auburn.

But these extravagances were no doubt most conspicuous in the earliest years of the movement. The common sense of the majority of Spiritualists soon revolted against the attempt on the part of certain mediums to win recognition for themselves and their utterances by the use of great names. There were, indeed, from the very beginning some, more level-headed than the rest, to warn their fellow-believers against placing implicit reliance on any of the spirit teachings. Of Sunderland we have already spoken. Brittan, too, consistently appears to have shown a critical spirit, and from a discussion at the New York Conference, in the early part of 1854—started apparently by the intervention of a boy of fifteen and a girl not much older, who had spoken under control at a previous conference—it appears that many leading Spiritualists adopted a similar attitude, and recognised that so-called spirit utterances should be judged on their merits.[4]

Of automatic trance-speaking at this time, even to large audiences, we have innumerable accounts; but as reports were not, as a rule, preserved, we have rarely any means of judging of the value of the utterance beyond the effect alleged to have been produced on the audience. Thus a boy of twelve is said to have preached sermons "characterised by a depth of thought that would do credit to the most eminent divines."[5] Miss Vanduzer, controlled by the spirit of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 113.
[2] *The Educator*, pp. 46, 297.
[3] *The Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 169.
[4] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. pp. 146–9, 196, 200.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 387.

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Lorenzo Dow, delivered discourses in Wampsville (N. Y.) and its neighbourhood "to from five hundred to two thousand earnest listeners."[1] The Eureka circle at West Troy were, we read, "sitting at present for a course of lectures from the spirit of Dr. Franklin on the laws of progression." The next course, by the same lecturer, was to treat of the solar system.[2]

But of the more important automatic writings of the period many were published.

One of the earliest of these books was *The Pilgrimage of Thomas Paine and others to the Seventh Circle*, by the Rev. C. Hammond, Medium, published at New York in 1852. In his Preface Hammond expressly disclaims any personal credit for the work. "I had no will to write it, or exercised any other control, than to let my hand be moved by an invisible influence, and write as it would." Often, he explains, he could not tell what word he was writing until it was completed, and very rarely knew the whole sentence beforehand. The book, which contains over two hundred and fifty pages octavo, was produced with extreme rapidity. Hammond began to write at the end of December, 1851, the manuscript was completed on the 1st of February following, and the book published on the 5th of March.

The Pilgrimage purports to be a recital by Thomas Paine of his spiritual experiences. He begins by describing his death-bed, and how in his dying hours he was visited by his beloved wife, who revealed herself to him as a spirit and explained to him something of the spirit world. After his death he is present at his own funeral, hears the minister read the service over the grave, and overhears later a conversation, in which the minister expresses his fears that "poor Tom Paine" is eternally lost.

He is then cheered and instructed by conversation with his wife and mother in the spirit world, and is made to see "his former wisdom isolated and torn into fragments." He meets Washington, Richard Rush, the inevitable Franklin, and others, and is introduced to William Penn. Penn argues with him through many pages, convinces him of errors in his earth life, and finally converts him to a knowledge of the truth. He is then led by Penn towards a light exceeding the brightness of a thousand suns, through an archway built of stones of the most excellent workmanship, and clear as crystal, into a magnificent temple. The temple was all inlaid with gold, and within it Paine saw

[1] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii. p. 461. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 341.

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"a mind standing with elevated wisdom at his head, and at his feet were sitting students of Nature, who received instruction from him. In his right hand he held a book, and in his left a banner. The book was opened and the banner unfurled. 'This is not made with hands,' said he, 'but came from Mount Horeb, where the everlasting covenant was given to the children of the Most High. Advance, Stranger, and receive the blessing which thou hast refused in thy unbelief.' Paine thereupon came forward and received the book, and the mind then sat down."

Thereafter Paine goes with his guide to a poor cottage near London, where the tenant lies dying. "Near by lived the lord of the heritage, who rode in livery and fared sumptuously." The spirit guide impressed this nobleman to visit the dying man, a labourer on his estate. When in the cottage the spirits succeeded in effecting the nobleman's conversion by rattling the catch of the window. Again, William Penn

"conducted me to a wall. There was no door of entrance. It was made of Scorn. I could see through the wall, for there were a great many portholes. I saw a wide circle of minds peeping through those holes, as though suspicious of our encroachments. When we had passed round the fortress, I heard the centurion say, 'To arms! to arms!'"

There followed a long discussion between Penn and the centurion, from which we gather that the centurion and the folk in the castle are typical of Christians who hold blindly to the letter of the Bible and persecute those who differ from them. Paine is afterwards bidden to enter the castle and instruct a deacon therein in the principles of true religion; and at the end of the chapter he succeeds in converting him. Once more he goes to the castle with four-and-twenty elders, and a thousand times ten thousand are converted and received into the temple. Finally, he is rapt up to the Seventh Circle, or Court of Beauty.

"The whole circle ascended, and were introduced into a mansion resting on twenty-four pillars, which were polished smooth as glass, and over which stood the most wonderful mansion that my eyes had ever beheld. On entering the mansion I saw a white throne, and in front thereof were written the words, 'Purity, Perfection, and Bliss.' Over the throne was written, 'Nature unfolded by revelation,' under it the words, 'Justice, Liberty, Peace.' On the right was a representation of a little child leading a lion, and a wolf nursing a lamb. On the left was a wounded serpent, with a spike driven through his head and clinched in a rock. Beneath our feet were

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pillars of Wisdom, while over our heads the beauty of sweet minstrels appeared."

Then one of them that dwelt in the Court of Beauty expounded the meaning of the pillars, and the things that were round about the throne.

The imagery, it will be seen, is obviously derived partly from the Apocalypse, partly from the *Pilgrim's Progress* and other religious works; whilst in the substance of the revelation there is nothing to indicate any other source than the medium's own mental stores. It does not even appear that he was acquainted either with the history or the opinions of the spirit purporting to inspire him.

In the following year was published Edmonds' and Dexter's *Spiritualism*, which consists mainly of spirit messages written through the hand of Dr. Dexter and others.

This is Swedenborg's annunciation, delivered April 4th, 1853, through Dr. Dexter:—

"In the name of God I am Sweedenborg (*sic*).

"Does a man know a star because he seeth the light thereof? Sayeth he, The moon burneth because she casteth a shadow? Does not the water bathe the shore of both worlds, and is not ocean's bosom broad enough for the ships of all nations? And yet a star is but one in a galaxy of glory in the heavens, and the moon's light is borrowed from a brighter orb than her own mountains. She reflects only the light that she borrows. Can you contemplate a whole creation because you see the light of one star or one moon? Can you determine the extent of the ocean because you behold one of its waves? Thus you can as little judge of Spirit Manifestations as you can of the star, the moon, or the ocean. Wait and watch, for ere long what is dark will be made light, and what is difficult made easy. Do you love your wife or child, and see in them attributes which confer happiness? Can you look on earth in her beauty, her hills and dales, trees and flowers, and not feel as if it was made for your enjoyment? Have you ever examined truly your own hearts? Do you really desire their purity? Are your thoughts the mirrors of your souls? Do you sincerely live that your death may be glorious? Let each one ask himself these questions to-night, and when I meet you again you shall hear the truths which it is my mission to teach.[1]

A few weeks later, in the course of a long discourse from Bacon, the following passage occurs:—

"I feel that your thoughts have been occupied in digesting the great truths taught last night by Sweedenborg. I am writing through

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 101.

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the hand of Dr. Dexter, and to many persons, looking on and beholding the use of the same expressions as you adopt on earth, they would remark on its foolishness and absurdity as a spirit manifestation. But look at the ideas we inculcate, regard the thoughts we express. And if in the whole history of written thought there is anything that can approach it, either in the magnitude of the ideas or the profundity of the thoughts, then I am heartily willing it should be said to be a farce."[1]

But Bacon himself could on occasion rise to a lofty strain, as witness the following extract:—

"How glorious that man's destiny! He leaves behind the errors of time, and boldly pushing forward through the untried future, he plants his standard on the very outward wall of eternity, and here he makes his stand; here he calls around him all the aid that position furnishes, and he leaves the traces of his progress in his errors, the doings, the actions sacrificed to truth, which he scatters in the pathway which has led to this goal.—BACON."[2]

It was such passages as these which moved Tallmadge to write to Judge Edmonds that, after reading all the specimens of ancient and modern eloquence, and after listening to some of the greatest orators of the day, he could say without hesitation, "I have never read nor heard anything to equal the communications from Bacon and Swedenborg. For beauty of style and sublimity of thought their equal never proceeded from mortal man."[3]

One of the most remarkable writing mediums at this time was Charles Linton. He was a young man of good intelligence, but limited education, who for some years had earned his living as a blacksmith. At twenty-two years of age he became a clerk in a store in Philadelphia, and afterwards bookkeeper. He then became developed as a writing medium. Many communications were written through his hand which purported to be from Daniel Webster.[4] At another time Governor Tallmadge and Mr. Fenno, an actor, held a conversation with the spirit of Shakespeare, writing through the medium's hand. Tallmadge, in endorsing Fenno's account of the séance, states that some of the ablest

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 181. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 267.
[3] Quoted in *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii. p. 311.
[4] Some of these are quoted in the Appendix to Edmonds' and Dexter's *Spiritualism*, vol. i. It is interesting to note that J. Bovee Dods says of them that they bore a "respectable impress of the exalted intellect" of the deceased statesman (*Spirit Manifestations Examined*, p. 129).

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critics have pronounced the communications perfectly Shakespearian. Two extracts are subjoined:—

"To act requireth two things—a brain and an eye; the scene will do almost all the rest.

"The eye calleth up and *holdeth* the magic spell, which in the audience centres.

"Thy brain the gestures makes—the stand, the position; and grace doth take therefrom its own existence.

"The eye speaks volumes; silly mouthers may mince and hawk, but with thy piercing eye thou'lt dumb them *all*."[1]

And again, in response to some remarks from Fenno about the management of the voice, and the difficulty of portraying passion without ranting:—

"The ocean waves rise and fall; the mountains wave in earthly strength; the plains undulate in airy waves; and the light, the life of all things, partakes of the inmost principles producing these outside results; hence, to speak well and gracefully, you must not beat the sea flat with a hurricane, or with an earthquake rend the mountains, or tear the plain into a level void; but imitate the waves of the ocean, rise from a dead calm to grand sublimity, and subside again with the gentle ease of the mighty fluid. You catch the breeze gently, and a lovely strain will vibrate through your throat; your spirit catches the tone, and in unison vibrates. Onward and upward you rush, and as the waves rise in grandeur, the bark of opposition is handled, as the boundless ocean handles the unmoored vessel."[2]

But some time in 1853 Linton was bidden by the spirits to prepare for the inditing of a great work, and in the course of the next four months there was written through his hand a long dissertation, forming a volume of over 370 pages octavo (considerably over 100,000 words). The writing, as we are told by Tallmadge, who was frequently present, was performed rapidly and in a clear hand, different from the medium's ordinary writing, and the manuscript presented hardly any erasure or alteration. The medium was not entranced during the writing, and would indeed occasionally converse with Tallmadge, interrupting his writing for the purpose. But according to his own account of the matter, Linton had no idea beforehand of the ground-plan of the book, and frequently did not see even a word ahead of that which he was writing; he wrote what was given him from moment to

[1] *The Healing of the Nations*, p. 504, by Charles Linton. New York, 1858. The italic marks, Tallmadge tells us, are the spirit's own.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 506, 507.

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moment to write. The book is a religious rhapsody; an outpouring, without definite logical plan or strict coherence, of a devout and intelligent, but not highly educated mind; the ideas and imagery seem obviously drawn almost exclusively from the Bible and various religious writings. The following extracts will give a fair idea of the contents of the book:—[1]

"71. Thy imperfection does not regulate God's perfection.

"72. Thy unfaithfulness will never check his liberality.

"73. If thou hadst never existed, God's power or his love and light had never been less. Having existence, if thou dost not comprehend them surely the fault is thine own.

"74. A little time is given thee on earth, and in that time thou dost see all things perishing, changing, and unto thy sight passing away. Then why shouldst thou labour about and among them?

"75. The earth is regulated by time, thou by eternity.

"76. That is the creature of a day, thou the ornament of a God-given eternity. That is thy feeding-place, designed to give thee strength and knowledge. Eternity is the home whence the knowledge cometh, and in which thou wilt learn in purity that which emanates from the eternal fountain of Light.

"77. Thou art a seed dropped in earth by God's own hand.

"78. Thou art nourished by His own holy attributes.

"79. His pure Light quickens thee, feeds thee with thought, forms the harmony of thy mind; His love, as a gentle dew, falls upon thy morning and evening wanderings, and in the shade of the sunny noon He fans thee as a mother doth her sleeping babe."

The book, which was published in 1855 under the title of *The Healing of the Nations*, represents inspirational writing at its best. Another book of the same type was produced at about the same time through the mediumship of John Murray Spear, of whom we have already spoken in chapter ii.[2] On the 1st of April, 1853, Mr. Spear, who had for about two years been interested in Spiritualism, and had, indeed, already written some *Messages from the Spirit Life*, under the inspiration of John Murray, found his hand involuntarily moved to write a document setting forth that a band of spirits, called the "Association of Beneficents," had chosen him as their mouthpiece for certain revelations to mankind. A few months later Spear and

[1] *Healing of the Nations*, p. 179.

[2] *The Educator, being Suggestions, theoretical and practical, designed to promote Man-Culture and Integral Reform, with a view to the ultimate establishment of a Divine Social State on Earth*, etc. Boston, 1857.

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another medium, in inspirational strophe and antistrophe, announced that there were six other associations with similar ends, who designed to use for the teaching of mankind the same earthly instruments. They were called severally the "Association of Electric-izers," the "Association of Element-izers," the "Association of Healthful-izers," and so on. Thereafter, at different periods, Spear was delivered in the trance state of dissertations on the structure and laws of society, the duties of humanity, the process of creation, the nature of elementary substances, of electricity, of the laws of health, etc., which were sometimes written by his hand, sometimes spoken and taken down by an amanuensis. They were afterwards edited by the Rev. A. E. Newton, and published as Volume I. of the *Educator*. The work bears a certain general resemblance to the *Divine Revelations* of Andrew Jackson Davis, and, like it, teaches Socialism as the highest form of human society, even sketching out a plan for a model colony which would realise the divine idea upon earth. In its cosmological section, however, it is less pretentious than the earlier work, and is almost entirely innocent, not merely of scientific terminology, but of the most elementary scientific knowledge. There is, indeed, an almost mediæval quality in these untrammelled speculations on the phenomena of the physical universe.

The various spirit associations, speaking through the mouth of Spear, declared the sun to be the eye of God, and to consist of vitalised electricity; it further acts as a focus through which rays from the Grand Diamonics, which is another term for "the Grand Central Source of all Life, all Light, all Wisdom, all Knowledge," are directed on to the earth. These rays, which we know as *light*, consist ultimately of fine, angular, diamond-shaped particles, being indeed of the same substance as the diamond itself. These particles of light penetrate the interior of the earth, mingle with certain fine sands, and there "copulate, cohere, multiply, expand, grow, and take the form of gold."[1] Or, again, here is a passage which might have been written by Paracelsus or Eirenæus Philalethes :—

"Like all things else, polishing is wrought by a fixed, simple and natural law. It is the action of the finer on the coarser. Each thing has within itself a certain amount and quality of caloric. It

[1] This is a familiar idea amongst the alchemists. See, for instance, Fludd, *The Mosaicall Philosophy*, p. 221: "The Etheriall Sperm or Astralicall influences are of a far subtiler condition than is the vehicle of visible light. Yea, verily,

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[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [

conception of a new poem began: "At the hour of noon the archetypal ideas were internally wrought by spiritual agency into the inmost mind of the medium, he at the time having passed into a spiritual or interior condition. From that time till the 4th of August, fed by continued influxes of celestial life, these archetypal ideas internally unfolded within his interior or spiritual self," and were then dictated by the entranced medium at intervals, again during fourteen consecutive days. Harris himself professed entire ignorance in his waking condition of the poem and all connected with its utterance. This second poem, which contains over 5,000 lines, in varying metres, is called *A Lyric of the Morning Land*. The poem consists almost entirely of a succession of lyrics, strung on a slender thread of connecting narrative, also rhymed. A few extracts are subjoined:—

"THE POET'S SONG OF OUTER LIFE.

I.

"We are shadows, we are shadows,
Fading with the night of time,
Till the poppy wreaths we twine
Overcome us in the meadows.
Shrouded in our robes of white,
Phantoms of a fled delight,
Pallid ghosts of memory,
To our children henceforth we.

II.

"As the stream to ocean glideth,
To its burial in the waves,
We are hurried to our graves;
Death alone eterne abideth,
Sitting on his throne of graves;
And the dreary wind that raves,
Blows us from life's shaken tree;
Wind-swept shadows henceforth we."

Here are the opening stanzas from the "Song of Saturn":—

I.

"I am the Patriarch Star; I stand
And view, entranced, that Wondrous Land,
That Worlds ascend to when they rise
From outward space to inward skies.
I am the eldest child of Space,
And gaze into the Sun's bright face,
And in the Sun, prophetic, see
My own approaching destiny.

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II.

"Soon shall I cease, a planet fair,
To glow in Nature's azure air;
Soon shall I circling cease to swim
Within the bounds that circle in
The Solar System. I shall pass
Beyond the sea of fire and glass,
And all my Angel-Nations rise
Into diviner harmonies."

And here are extracts from the latter part of the poem describing the bliss of the after-state:—

"Great Milton dwelleth here; he sees with eyes
Grown brighter from Earth's desolate eclipse:
And Dante and his Angel-bride; from skies
That outward burn he turns to her sweet lips.
Correggio here, the poet-painter, dips
His pencil in celestial light, and throws
Visions from God's unveiled Apocalypse
O'er all the burning walls. In splendid rows
The Demigods of Song enjoy the Heart's repose.

These glorious ones are seated twain; beside
Each Lyric Angel glows his Seraph-bride;
And they who on the Earth, most desolate,
Died with slow fires of wrong, sit most in state,
And they rejoice, being free from mortal stain;
And evermore within that sphered fane
The multitudinous anthems peal and roll;
And evermore some New-ascended Soul
Joins their triumphant choir; and far below
Lies the vailed sepulchre of mortal woe.
And evermore Celestial Angels twine
For them fresh garlands; and they drink the wine
Of Poesy, and with diviner art
They chant their lyric hymns."[1]

From the foregoing extracts a fair—perhaps even an unduly favourable—estimate may be formed of these "inspirational" writings. If we allow the claim put forward that these various writings were, so far as the ordinary consciousness of the medium was concerned, absolutely extemporaneous, it must be conceded that they are highly remarkable productions. Not, indeed, that any of them appear either in thought or expression to be beyond the possible range of the medium's capacities, working under favourable conditions. So much, as we have seen, is admitted in the case of T. L. Harris. But the improvisation of some

[1] *A Lyric of the Morning Land.* New York, 1855. Glasgow, John Thomson, 1869. See also *Telegraph Papers*, vol. vi. p. 291.

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5,000 lines roughly of the same quality as those set down above—even if we assume that the work was polished at leisure—would certainly be a remarkable feat in any circumstances. Part of the explanation, at any rate in the case of comparatively finished work like that of Davis, Linton, and Harris, is no doubt to be found in the sentence already quoted from the last-named medium; the ideas were probably latent or fructifying for some time before they found external expression, and that fructifying process was, it is likely, carried on somewhere in the twilight of consciousness.

The actual utterances, again, are distinguished by certain characteristics which may be said to be typical of automatic utterance in general. To begin with, we note the extraordinary fluency of the speaker. Whatever we may think of the value of their remarks, there can be no question that the little boys and girls at this period who preached for an hour at a time to crowded congregations, or uneducated youths like Davis and Linton who indited long treatises, could not in their normal condition have spoken or written at such length, or with such copiousness of vocabulary. We note, moreover, in some of the utterances of this time, as for instance in "Bacon's" messages through Dr. Dexter, in Linton's book, and in Harris' poems, a tendency to sonorous and grandiloquent language, such as we have had occasion to note amongst the Irvingites. We shall meet with many more specimens hereafter, in discussing the later phases of Spiritualism.

Much of this sounding stuff no doubt consists pretty obviously of distorted echoes from earlier writings—the Bible, Shelley, and popular poets and preachers of the day being probably the chief sources. But there were few instances of actual, even unconscious, plagiarism. Some charges of this kind had, as already shown, been substantiated against A. J. Davis;[1] some stanzas in Harris' inspired poems have been traced to foreign sources;[2] and there are three or four examples to be found of "inspired" poems given at séances which were afterwards discovered to have been previously written by Longfellow, James Wallis East-

[1] See *ante*, Book I. chap. xi.

[2] Mr. Gerald Massey points out that in one volume alone of Harris' poems, *Hymns of Spiritual Devotion* (New York, 1857), there are couplets or stanzas obviously suggested by corresponding lines in the works of Watts, Hebet, Mrs. Browning, Thomas Moore, and others. But Mr. Massey does not, I think, make good his charge of deliberate plagiarism. (*Concerning Spiritualism*, pp. 19, 20. London, 1874?).

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burn, etc.[1] But it is not necessary to presume fraud even in such cases, and most of the inspired writings bear internal evidence of their genuineness.

For what, after all, is the special characteristic of the automatic utterances? In the most favourable specimens we note that, however full and rapid the stream, it is a trifle turbid—"Cum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles": the expression has run away with the thought. And at a slightly lower level we can hardly detect any connected scheme at all; it is a sequence of detached images, the raw material of thought, a heap of bricks waiting for the builder. This characteristic was pointed out a generation earlier by Bertrand, who showed that, in the trance, whilst the memory and imagination of the ecstatic are stimulated to abnormal activity, the critical faculties are more or less in abeyance.[2]

This defect in coherency is sufficiently conspicuous in Davis' work; to furnish a logical account of the teaching in Linton's *Healing of the Nations*, or to unfold the steps of the argument in any of Spear's inspired dissertations, would require a double portion of inspiration in the expositor. During these automatic performances, in other words, the medium seems to be in a state allied to that found at certain stages of intoxication, when the evolution of mental images is more rapid than in ordinary life, whilst the judgment and reasoning faculties are drowsy.

The various other phases of the automatic impulse need no more than a brief reference. In some cases, as notably with Judge Edmonds, and occasionally with T. L. Harris and Mrs. Ferguson, the medium was vouchsafed allegorical visions, which he would describe to those around him.[3] There were many who drew automatically; the drawings representing flowers, fruit, celestial figures and landscapes, geometrical or symbolic designs. Others were given visions of spirit persons, and directed to portray the features on canvas. Allen Putnam devotes a considerable part of his book, *Natty, a Spirit*, to describing how he was led by spirit guidance to select an artist, and how the artist in trance was directed by a power not his own in painting the portrait of Natty.[4] The first volume of Edmonds' and Dexter's *Spiritualism* contains as a frontispiece a steel engraving of a symbolic picture

[1] See Rogers, *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents*, pp. 169, 170; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. pp. 120, 205, 300; Mattison's *Spirit-Rapping*, p. 114.

[2] *Traité du Somnambulisme.*

[3] See *Spiritualism*, by Edmonds and Dexter, vol. i. pp. 268, 289, 300, etc.

[4] Boston, 1856.

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representing a terrace in a formal garden surrounded with plants of a tropical appearance; on either side of a flight of steps, which lead down to a lake encircled with mountains and embellished with castles and a swan-prowed boat, are two pedestals supporting each an angel, whose outstretched arms converge on a figure, crowned with a sun-like halo, who floats in mid-air a little above them, and himself points the way to the skies. It is called "Invitation to Spirit Land."

The artist was a young man named Josiah Wolcott, who had been brought up to the trade of chair-painting, had subsequently risen to do the ornamental part of coach-painting, and had finally seen visions and been commanded by the spirits to paint what he saw, and show the world the glories of the spirit sphere.[1]

Automatism—or spirit control—showed itself in various other forms. Thus Tallmadge tells us that his daughter of thirteen, who knew not a note of music and had never touched a piano in her life, was controlled to play Beethoven's Grand Waltz, and various popular airs.[2] We read of a physician who, "under influence," was made to mount the stump in a public street and crow like a cock.[3] And the impulse to dance, frequently, as in earlier religious revivals, seized the entranced persons, to the number sometimes of fifty at a time. The dances performed in this way were sometimes "recognised" by the onlookers as of Indian origin; sometimes they purported to have a symbolic significance, which would be afterwards expounded by one of the mediums.[4]

Again, there were numerous cases of healing mediums. Sometimes the mediums were in the normal condition; sometimes they professed to be in the trance, and to receive directions from a spirit-doctor as to the drugs and herbs to be used, and the methods to be followed in the cure. In not a few cases the healer would receive a "call" to go to a certain street and a certain house in a distant town and ask for a certain person who required his healing ministrations. In some of these instances, as in the various cases related by John Murray Spear, the impulse was, no doubt, a genuine one, and the medium himself not consciously aware of the

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 480 *et seq.* For other instances of spirit-drawing see *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. pp. 401–3; vol. v. 181; Adin Ballou, *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, p. 97; Mrs. Hardinge Britten's *History*, p. 265, etc.

[2] *Healing of the Nations*, Introduction, p. 61.

[3] Mrs. H. Britten, *History*, p. 293.

[4] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. pp. 352–6; vol. v. pp. 24, 91; Mrs. H. Britten's *History*, p. 389.

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object of his mission, or of any link of connection with the sick person.[1] There are several examples of similar guiding monitions related on good authority of the early "Friends" in this country. But obviously it would be extremely hazardous to found on such evidence a presumption, I do not say of spirit guidance, but even of supernormal knowledge. In other cases recorded at this period—*e.g.* with the notorious Mrs. French—it seems likely that the impulse was imaginary, and the whole incident fictitious.

In fine, none of the cases recorded in this or the preceding chapter afford even a *primâ facie* ground for supposing supernormal faculties of any kind. Such instances of clairvoyance, speaking with tongues, and trance writing and speaking as cannot readily be attributed to the known powers of automatism find an adequate explanation in fraud and unconscious exaggeration.

[1] Adin Ballou, *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, pp. 93-7; *Messages from the Superior State*, edited by S. C. Hewitt, pp. 28, etc. Boston, 1852.

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CHAPTER VI

GENERAL SURVEY OF THE MOVEMENT

SO far as the evidence before us enables us to form a judgment, we have found little reason to infer any supernormal element in the beginnings of Modern Spiritualism. The earliest physical phenomena were apparently of the ordinary Poltergeist type, but springing up in an unusually favourable environment, they were gradually improved and systematised by the Fox children and by their numerous imitators. Even the raps which formed so prominent a feature in the outbreak at Hydesville and its subsequent developments can be paralleled from many earlier records. The distinguishing characteristic of the new movement was its permanency; and this, again, was no doubt due largely to the extraordinarily favourable reception which the youthful impostors encountered and to their long immunity from detection. Some credit must also be assigned to the "mediums" themselves for their skill in inventing and perfecting one or more methods of rapping, and for that practised facility in noting and interpreting slight gestures, hesitations, changes of voice, and other indications, which formed, no doubt, the secret of their ability to answer mental questions.

As the movement grew, the physical phenomena, in response, it may be surmised, to the insatiable demands of its patrons, grew more elaborate and more audacious. But their essential character appears to have remained unchanged. It is clear that the records quoted in chapter iii.—and as already said, I have studied to present the evidence at its best—do not afford even a faint presumption of the interference of any unfamiliar mode of energy. The facts recorded suggest fraud; they are such as are known to have been produced fraudulently both before and since this epoch; and neither the precautions alleged to have been taken, the qualifications of the observers, nor the circumstances of the

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experiments, were such as to afford an effectual safeguard against the ingenuity of practised tricksters.

This view of the matter finds strong confirmation in the analysis of the mental phenomena given in the last two chapters. On the one hand, we find that evidence, such as we can regard as *primâ facie* worthy of consideration, for the exercise, by persons whose good faith may fairly be presumed, of any supernormal faculty, is almost entirely wanting, a want which is the more surprising because we have found traces of such faculties in the past, and possess in recent experimental work and in the trance utterances of Mrs. Piper and others a considerable body of evidence for their operations at the present time. On the other hand, hireling mediums of this period furnished many instances of mental telegraphy, speaking with tongues, and the like, where the evidence would be quite unexceptionable, if we could assume the honesty of the chief actors and their witnesses.

As against the view that the physical phenomena and the instances of mental telegraphy and speaking with tongues furnished by professional mediums were in all cases due to fraud, the rarity at this time of any demonstration of fraud may be urged. It is no doubt true that trickery was seldom detected. There are one or two cases, however, in which mediums professing to bring "apports" of various objects into séance-rooms were convicted of fraud. In one such case it was claimed that a knife and a ribbon had been carried by spirit agency across the Atlantic, but the imposture was detected a few months later, and denounced in the *Spiritual Telegraph*;[1] and there may have been other cases of exposure which were hushed up. But it is probable from the scantiness of references by hostile critics that exposures at this time were extremely rare.

It is obvious, however, that the conditions were unfavourable to the detection of fraud. The exposures with which the later annals of Spiritualism are filled have almost always been concerned with such complicated and audacious manifestations as "materialisation," or spirit photography. The earlier phenomena did not readily lend themselves to such methods of investigation. Where no apparatus is used, and the performance is shrouded in darkness, it is extremely difficult to prove trickery, however certain the investigator may be, on a wide comparison of instances, that trickery is responsible for the manifestations. It would have been

[1] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. vi. p. 131.

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practically impossible, for instance, to convict Gordon or Hume of fraud in their levitation performances. If the gas had suddenly been turned up, and the medium found standing on a chair or table when he should have been floating in the air, it would have been as easy for him to suggest as for the spectators to believe that the spirits had let him drop because the action of the light prevented the completion of their task. Or, again, if Fowler had been observed copying passages from the Hebrew Bible on his own account, it may be surmised that an explanation that he was acting under spirit-control would have met with ready acceptance. Indeed, the foundations of that famous system of Spiritualist apologetics, the doctrine of spirit-control, were already being laid. The Poughkeepsie seer, as we have seen in chapter i. of the present book, first introduced it to account for some of the Stratford performances. And the members of the Springfield Harmonial Circle, in January, 1851, gave a testimonial to the medium Gordon which contains the following passage:—

"It may be stated, however, as a circumstance which seems to have been the cause of some misapprehension, that the individual referred to is highly susceptible to the magnetic power of spirits, and that, under the influence of an impression which he is unable to resist, he occasionally endeavours to perform the very action which he *perceives to be in the mind of the spirit*. Of this peculiarity we were made fully aware at the commencement of our investigations, and throughout the whole have been unable to discover any evidence of deception, or even secretiveness, with regard to the assistance which he sometimes undesignedly renders the spirits, in being acted upon by their influence."[1]

In such circumstances the task of exposing trickery would have been a singularly thankless one. But, in fact, the explanation of the immunity of the medium is to be sought rather in the general conditions of the mental environment than in any skill on his part, whether in apologetics or in sleight-of-hand. That part of the American public which concerned itself with the manifestations at all was possessed by the belief that, whatever their explanation, they were genuine. This belief became, in fact, an epidemic delusion hardly less imperative than the ideas suggested by the hypnotist to his subject. It did not occur to the earlier investigator, prepossessed as he was by this belief, to be constantly on his guard against fraud. He did not turn

[1] *The Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 21.

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up the light while Gordon was being levitated, or look under the table when the spirits were writing, or seize the spirit hands presented to him. Fraud was to him, at worst, an occasional incident of the manifestations.

Again, the pecuniary factor was not so prominent at these early séances as it has since become. The Fox girls are said to have taken no money for their performances at first, until indeed the "spirits" insisted on their doing so; and groups of admirers from time to time subscribed, so that popular mediums, the Foxes or others, might give gratuitous sittings to inquirers.[1] It is stated by Partridge and others that Koons would take neither money nor recompense of any other kind for the performances in his spirit-room.[2] Ballou mentions the case of some physical mediums in poor circumstances who invariably refused to take money from those who attended their séances.[3] The same thing is recorded in the *Spirit World*[4] of a rapping medium. But in this case the medium was a child, who accepted ten cents for himself, whilst his father, who refused the larger sums offered, was probably ignorant of the deception practised. It is significant that in the first volume, at any rate, of the *Spiritual Telegraph* (1853) there are but few advertisements of mediums, and those exclusively of medical clairvoyants, who charged a fee for diagnosing and prescribing.

It is probable that the unseemliness of selling spiritual gifts at a price was recognised at the outset, as it has more or less been recognised ever since. It is stated on good authority that in more recent times D. D. Home (Hume) habitually, and Eusapia Paladino at least occasionally, refused to accept money payments for their séances. But it is certain that most mediums both then and now took regular fees, and probably all have received a sufficient payment in coin or in kind.[5] In any case, as will appear later, unpaid mediumship is not necessarily honest; there are other than pecuniary inducements to fraud—even to systematic and long-continued fraud. There is nothing, then, in the surrounding circumstances to weaken the presumption of fraud derived from an examination of the phenomena themselves.

[1] Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *History*, p. 134.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 311.
[3] *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, pp. 83–7.
[4] Vol. iii. p. 45.
[5] *Cf.* the *North American Review*, April, 1855: "The frequently mercenary character of this necromancy goes far towards negativing the idea of its spiritual origin. In almost every city in New England are Pythonesses (not always persons of fair reputation), who, for the price of fifty cents and upwards, will command the presence and responses of the most exalted spirits that ever dwelt on earth."

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The explanation of the ready credence which greeted these supposed proofs of spirit intervention, notwithstanding that to our judgment it seems clear that where not merely inconclusive they were deliberately fraudulent, lies partly, as we have seen, in the apparent marvel of answers to mental questions through the raps, partly in the fact that the indubitable genuineness of the automatic manifestations in private persons predisposed the inquirers to accept as genuine in the professional medium what purported to be phenomena of the same class, but in a higher stage of development.

But the explanation of the facile acceptance and rapid spread of the new marvels is chiefly to be sought, as we have endeavoured to indicate in chapter ii., in the special conditions of the nation and the times; in the general diffusion of education combined with an absence of authoritative standards of thought and the want of critical training; in the democratic genius of the American people; in their liability to be carried away by various humanitarian enthusiasms; in the geographical conditions incident to a rapidly expanding civilisation. But especially, as we have seen, this tendency to belief was fostered by the still recent growth of popular interest in Mesmerism and in the various theories of a physical effluence—odyle, etherium, or vital electricity—which were associated with it, and had already been employed to explain the manifestations of various "electric" girls and other impostors, as well as the probably innocent hallucinations of Reichenbach's sensitives. No doubt, too, the introduction throughout the continent of the electric telegraph, an invention still so recent that the popular mind had not become familiarised with it, and still regarded its operations with something of childlike wonder, helped to quicken expectation and generally to induce a mental condition favourable to belief in other phenomena, which after all were to the uninstructed not more mysterious. As we have seen, it was in electricity that Spiritualists sought the physical basis of their phenomena.

But whatever the explanation, of the facts there can be no doubt. The people who wrote and lectured about the spiritualistic manifestations had been almost to a man prepossessed with a belief in their genuineness. The evidence upon which they supposed this belief to rest played much the same part in its structure as the element of external sensation, according to some French writers, in a hallucination; it was less a justification than an opportunity. Hardly

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less remarkable than the existence of this epidemic delusion is the fact that outside the obsessed circle so few persons of any intellectual standing thought the matter sufficiently important to inquire into, still less to write about, and that by those writers who did express their entire disbelief in the phenomena the subject was treated with a very inadequate conception of its importance. Page's pamphlet consists of a few hasty memoranda. Mattison's book is superficial, mediocre in quality, ill-informed, and warped by theological rancour. C. W. Elliott, the most capable of these early critics, devotes unfortunately two chapters only of his book to the modern manifestations, and deals only with the beginnings of the movement. With these and a few other unimportant exceptions, every writer who had qualified himself by actual observation to express an opinion believed in the phenomena, or the bulk of them, as genuine.

The odylo-mesmeric hypothesis as applied to Spiritualism is well formulated by E. C. Rogers, a medical electrician.[1] According to this authority, the alleged phenomena, both physical and mental, were in the main—for he does not attempt to discriminate—genuine. The explanation common to both classes was that the medium was a person in whom the conscious and personal control of the higher brain centres was for the moment in abeyance, leaving the organism open to be acted upon by the universal cosmic forces. Thus he explains as follows the occurrence of raps at Sunderland's house: "By means of a specific pathetism sensitive persons are thrown into a condition of the nervous system in which the brain, losing the controlling power of the responsible agent, falls under the law of mundane dynamics, is acted upon and acts by the material agency of the world."[2] So clairvoyance, again, is explained as the result of a peculiar condition of the nervous system, in which the outward material world is brought into a special and intimate relation with the human organism. The whole tribe of Animal Magnetists and Mesmerists, the drummer of Tedworth, the Seeress of Prevorst, the electric girls, and the Poltergeists are cited in support of the theory; and a flavour of modernity is imparted by quotations from Carpenter on cerebral automatism, and by an exposition of Faraday's recent discovery of the magnetic properties of oxygen. The book is, in fact, nothing more than an elaborately futile attempt

[1] *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents.* Boston, 1853. *A discussion on the automatic Powers of the Brain (being an answer to the criticism of Rev. C. Beecher).* Same year. [2] *Philosophy* etc., p. 304.

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to restate in modern scientific terminology Mesmer's theory of a universal cosmic fluid.

Another theorist of the same type, but with less scientific pretensions, was J. Bovee Dods, who had been known for some years previously as a lecturer and writer on Mesmerism, and had in 1846 been interested in the trance revelations of A. J. Davis. In 1854 Dods published a book in which he essayed to give a complete explanation of the Spiritualist phenomena.[1] Dods' hypothesis is essentially the same as Rogers', though he is careful to explain that he does not believe in odic force. Like Rogers, he is satisfied that the phenomena in general are genuine, and depend for their manifestation upon the subconscious working of the medium's organism. The genuine medium, he explains (and he expressly includes in this category the Fox girls), is always honest. The movements of tables and chairs which occur in her presence are not consciously caused by her; they result from "a redundancy of electricity congregated upon the involuntary nerves"; the raps are caused by "an electro-magnetic discharge from the fingers and toes of the medium." But the force has its limitations. Generally the more violent physical movements—rocking and tilting of tables and chairs, and so on—are due to involuntary and unconscious movements on the part of the mediums. But tables may also be moved "by electro-magnetically charging the table from a living battery of many human hands, and thus attracting or repelling it without contact"; the process is really "as simple as the raising of a balloon," though perhaps more arduous; "the millions of pores in the table are filled with electro-magnetism from human brains, which is inconceivably lighter than the gas that inflates the balloon."[2] But the process will enable a piece of furniture to be levitated only after prolonged contact with the human body has allowed saturation to take place, and it will not be equally successful with all substances. Dods is justly critical of Edmonds' description of a dinner-bell moving round the circle unassisted. The judge had clearly not realised the insuperable difficulties in the way of such a feat, for, as Dods explains, "bell-metal is so dense, and its pores so minute . . . that its gravity cannot be overcome by charging it with nervo-vital force from a thousand brains."[3]

[1] *Spirit Manifestations Examined and Explained*, etc., by John Bovee Dods. New York, 1854. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 164. Dods, it should be explained, a few years later became an adherent of the Spiritualist doctrine.

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Even the North American Reviewer cannot but admit the genuineness of some of the phenomena, both physical and mental, and is constrained to propound a similar theory. It is probably, he thinks, the right hemisphere of the brain which, in the automatic or trance state, acts independently of its usual controlling centres in the left hemisphere. The spinal column, he suggests, is a battery in which the vertebræ play the part of the metallic plates and the soft matter of the spinal chord acts as acid. The right hemisphere, becoming in certain states overcharged with the electric force so produced, explodes and produces raps, lights, and physical movements. Rogers' hypothesis of the interference of the mundane forces reappears in the reviewer's suggestion that, as the electrical equilibrium of the whole surroundings may be disturbed by these explosions, the medium's organism can thus in effect draw (unconsciously) upon a huge reservoir of external energy for the production of physical movements upon a large scale.[1]

Other writers suggested that the legs of the tables were filled with electricity before each séance,[2] or that mediums resided near telegraph lines, and so became charged with electricity to such a degree that they spontaneously exploded in raps.[3] Hare's attention was first called to the manifestations by a correspondent who consulted him on the adequacy of the electric explanation of the phenomena.

In the Press, again, it is surprising to note how hospitably the phenomena were received. The smaller provincial journals naturally gave up much of their space to the manifestations as being excellent "copy." But many even of the daily papers in the principal towns, as the movement grew in importance, felt themselves unable to dismiss the whole subject as imposture, and suggested that, if not the agency of spirits, at any rate the working of some new material laws were demonstrated by the mysterious occurrences. The North American Reviewer begins his article by explaining that he had no liking for the task in hand, and had deferred it in the hope that the movement would die of itself. But so far from dying out it was growing in importance, and now included in its ranks some men of high culture and many persons of good repute and sound common sense. He adds:—

[1] *North American Review*, April, 1855.
[2] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii. p. 485.
[3] *Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 107.

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"We do not think the following paragraph from the address of the New England Spiritualists' Association an overstatement: 'It is computed that nearly two millions of people in our nation, with hundreds of thousands of people in other lands, are already believers in Spiritualism. No less than twelve or fourteen periodicals are devoted to the publication of its phenomena and the dissemination of its principles. . . . Every day, and much more than daily, lectures are given in the presence of audiences quite respectable as to both number and character; circles are held by day and by night in nearly every city, town, and village throughout our country.'"

Amongst the clergy of the various religious denominations the tendency on the whole seems to have been towards belief in the phenomena as being actually of spiritual origin. Many ministers from the more advanced denominations had, indeed, as already shown, accepted the new revelation in its entirety. Others, like the Rev. Charles Beecher, whilst pleading for a serious and dispassionate investigation and a careful trial of the claims put forward by the spirits, were inclined to suspect diabolism.[1] So the Swedenborgians generally, whilst believing in the genuineness of the manifestations, held it unprofitable or even dangerous to meddle with them. Thus, Henry James,[2] in an essay on the spirit-rappings, after stigmatising the assumed spirits as "ghostly busy-bodies," writes: "On the whole I am inclined to regard the so-called spirits rather as so many vermin revealing themselves in the tumble-down walls of our old theological hostelry, than as any very saintly or sweet persons, whose acquaintance it were edifying or even comfortable to make."[3]

Other Swedenborgians, however, took a prominent part in the early propaganda. But by the more orthodox sects generally the new movement was either condemned as mere folly and chicanery, or regarded as of probably diabolic origin; and there were cases in which ministers were expelled from their churches, teachers from their schools, and communicants from their congregations, for meddling with the unholy thing.[4]

[1] *Review of the Spiritualist Manifestations.* London, 1853.

[2] The father of the well-known novelist, and of Mr. William James, Professor of Psychology at Harvard.

[3] *Lectures and Miscellanies*, p. 418. New York, 1852. See also Bush on "Pseudo-Spiritualism," in *New Church Miscellanies* (New York, 1855); *The Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism*, by W. B. Hayden (Boston, 1855); and *The Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 115–17, for an exposition of the Swedenborgian views.

[4] See the extracts from various religious papers quoted by Ballou in his work, *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, chap. ix.

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This view of the matter was, in the time and circumstances and from the standpoint of the Christian believer, not altogether unnatural. For unquestionably the movement was, in certain phases, extravagant, blasphemous, and dangerous to accepted standards of morality. Perhaps the most damaging accusation brought against the Spiritualists at this time was that of the propaganda of free love. There were some grounds for the charge. From their close association with various contemporary Socialisms, so much might, perhaps, have been anticipated. For Socialism in its extreme form has generally included in its scheme for the reconstruction of society a reform of the institution of marriage; a reform which has taken the shape, sometimes, of lifelong celibacy, as amongst the Shakers, sometimes of a wider freedom, as amongst the Oneida Communists. There were in the early years of Spiritualism two or three societies which apparently taught and practised a similar freedom, of which the most notable was the Kiantone Community, which numbered amongst its prominent members John Murray Spear.[1] A few Spiritualist writers and lecturers advocated, or were understood to advocate, like views.[2] Moreover, charges of loose sexual relations were brought against A. J. Davis, Warren Chase, and others;[3] and the fact that many prominent mediums were married several times in the course of a few years appears to have been due to a certain laxity of the marriage tie, rather than to any exceptional rate of mortality.

Finally, if additional evidence is needed that the charge was not wholly baseless, we have the testimony of men like Adin Ballou and Joel Tiffany. Ballou, in the autumn of 1854, published a solemn warning to Spiritualists against the Free Love Movement, of which the signs were already manifest to him in certain quarters, pointing out that sexual aberrations of this kind had in the past again and again been associated with Spiritual movements like their own.[4] And Tiffany, in a course of lectures on Spiritualism delivered before the New York Conference in February, 1856, thought it

[1] Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *History*, pp. 233, 234.

[2] Mattison, *Spirit-Rapping*, pp. 101–4; Mahan, *Modern Mysteries*, etc., pp. 285, 286; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. vi. p. 336; and T. L. Nichols, in *Marriage*, quoted by Davis, *Great Harmonia*, vol. iv. pp. 410–14.

[3] See the *Magic Staff*, pp. 397, etc., and *Life Line of the Lone One*, pp. 145–155. Both Davis and Chase refer to the circumstances and offer plausible explanations of their conduct. Whilst, however, the episodes remain obscure, it would seem that, at worst, they were guilty of weakness or indiscretion, not of a calculated revolt against accepted and acceptable moral standards.

[4] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. vi. pp. 297, 298.

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necessary specially to distinguish the Spiritualist ideal of a permanent union founded on love from the debased travesty of so-called Free Love: "To say of the impulse calling for such union that it desires change, and consequent variety, is blasphemously false and absurd. The basis of conjugal love is as deep and immutable as are the foundations of immortality and eternal life."[1]

Spiritualism, indeed, necessarily attracted within its sphere the "cranks," the social theorists and reformers, the rebels against convention and the exiles from society. And as free love was in the air at the time, naturally the ranks of the Spiritualists were to some extent recruited from the adherents of that doctrine. But whatever the aberrations of individuals, or here and there of small cliques of Spiritualists, it would be impossible to substantiate the charge against Spiritualists as a body. In fact, the charge mainly rested upon a misconception. Free love, in the sense of perfect liberty for contracting temporary unions to be dissolved at will, was probably promulgated as an ideal by very few writers, and by none who can fairly be called representative Spiritualists. But there had been in America before 1848, as already shown, a wide-spreading impulse of social reform, which in one direction found expression in free discussion and criticism of marriage, of the position of woman, of sexual relations generally and of their bearing on the future of the race. The Spiritualists of the radical school had for the most part been brought up in an environment favourable to these ideas, and they were inevitably reflected in the Spiritualist propaganda. But whatever may have been the effect here and there on undisciplined individuals, it was a singular misconception which accused the teachers of the new ideas of a design to subvert the existing social order in the interests of sensual licence. The ideal put forward was even puritanic in some of its aspects. It was, indeed, the wrongs of women and children which for many advocates of so-called "free love" formed the ground and the inspiration of their teachings. The following resolution, moved by A. J. Davis and his wife Mary at a Spiritualist Congress held in September, 1856, expressed this aspect of the question. After reciting the claim of women to co-equal civil and political advantages with men, the resolution ends: "And that, in the marriage relation, she shall be fully secured in her natural rights to property, to the legal custody of her children, and to the entire control

[1] *Spiritualism Explained*, p. 205, by Joel Tiffany. New York, 1856.

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of her own person, that thereby fewer and better children may be born, and humanity be improved and elevated."[1]

To these purely mundane arguments Davis, Harris, and other Spiritualists added the doctrine, as old perhaps as mysticism itself, of spiritual counterparts. The infant was born married; somewhere or other in the wide world was the counterpartal half of his nature, waiting to be united to him. From this doctrine it followed that, while the true marriage was necessarily indissoluble and eternal, being in fact not a union, but a reunion, it was lawful and even expedient that other unions should be dissolved as soon as the mutual incompatibility became manifest and intolerable. "Transient marriages bring divorces. Divorces are natural until the harmonial plane is reached; there only an eternal union is natural."[2]

The spirit teachings of J. M. Spear are to a similar effect. Here is an excerpt from "a prayer for a marriage occasion": "Entering intelligently into the new relations, comprehending the divine matehood, may they be faithful to each other in all the relations of life; and should they, from any cause, come to feel that they are no longer husband and wife, amicably may they withdraw from one another."[3] And Brittan writes: "To constitute a true spiritual marriage two congenial souls must be irresistibly attracted and perfectly conjoined . . . by the spiritual natural law of affinity"; and when the marriage falls short of this ideal, if the married pair "cannot *possibly* agree to live together, they should do the next best thing, which may be to separate by mutual consent."[4]

In brief, the Spiritualists of the time, whilst regarding occasional divorces as a regrettable necessity, resulting from imperfect conditions, advocated the permanent union of one man with one woman as the ideal state. Their teachings, no doubt, especially because of that unfortunate doctrine of the "spiritual counterpart," may have done more than the teachers contemplated to encourage divorce; but I can find nothing to substantiate the charge that these men deliberately advocated the forming of temporary unions, still less that they connived at licence. It is obvious, indeed, to those who study the matter that their ideals were higher,

[1] A. J. Davis, *Events in the Life of a Seer*, p. 208. See also Warren Chase, *Life Line* and the *Spiritual Rostrum*, *passim*, for an enlargement of this theme.

[2] *Great Harmonia*, vol. iv. p. 418. See also vol. ii., *The True Marriage*.

[3] *The Educator*, p. 669. [4] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. vi. pp. 241, 245.

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and founded on a wider and juster view of the facts of life than appears to have been the case with some of their accusers.

There were, however, extravagances of doctrine or practice advocated "under spirit guidance" by individual Spiritualists which gave rise to much scandal. For such eccentric individuals could always reckon on a certain following amongst the ranks of their fellow-believers. As instances of these aberrations we may take the Mountain Cove Community and the New Motor.

THE MOUNTAIN COVE COMMUNITY.

The town of Auburn, New York State, had been from the first an active centre of spiritual propaganda. So early as 1850 there were, according to E. W. Capron, between fifty and a hundred mediums there. An "apostolic" circle had also been formed under the direction of a well-known medium, Mrs. Benedict, which claimed to receive through the raps communications from St. Paul, the prophet Daniel, and other high personages. "St. Paul" had also been instrumental in driving away an evil spirit which had obsessed a young girl for the space of a day and a half. In 1850, by direction of the same apostle Paul, given through the raps at the circle, James Scott, minister at Brooklyn of the sect of Seventh-Day Baptists, removed to Auburn; he was shortly followed by the Rev. T. L. Harris, and they soon gathered round them a group of disciples and founded a paper, *Disclosures from the Interior and Superior Care for Mortals*, whose columns are filled with messages signed "John the Divine," "Daniel the Prophet," etc., and with poetry inspired by the spirits of Shelley, Coleridge, and others.

Later, Harris being then in New York, the word came that a community should be founded, and that the faithful should yield themselves and their possessions implicitly to the guidance of the perfect medium, James Scott; and Scott himself, with about a hundred others, did in effect in the autumn of 1851 settle themselves on some land in Mountain Cove, Fayette co., Virginia, which had been spiritually indicated. The inspiration had now assumed a loftier source, as will be seen from the following quotation:—

"I read, written in letters of fire: Dost thou believe? and what dost thou believe? Who, thinkest thou, called thee here? Who,

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believest thou, appeareth to control? Who inspireth? Not an angel, for he is led: not a seraph, for he is controlled; *not created existence*, for that is inspired. Who, then, thinkest thou, called thee to the Mountain? *Who but a God inspireth!* Believest thou the indication of these questions? Who is prepared for the coming of the Son of Man? Who is it that hath consecrated and yielded themselves, severing therefrom every attachment to earth? Who have submitted their dictation and design entirely to him who ordereth this manifestation from the regions of intelligence perfected? Who doth not exercise external judgment, will, and design? Who doth not violate that law by which perfect redemption shall be accomplished in fallen man? *I Am That I Am inquireth now of thee! and prepare to answer thou me!* . . . None other than God, thy Redeemer, calleth for thee. None other than *He who hath the keys of death and hell addresseth you through one of your number!*"

At about the same time the inspired utterance through the mouth of Scott called upon the true believers to surrender all their worldly goods, and to hold them at the disposal of the spiritual guide, as follows:—

"God . . . hath aforetime committed to your charge, as His Stewards, the means designed to be employed while conducting the external in the manifestation into its consummation. And lo, now He cometh and calleth upon you, and requireth the charge committed, with its improvement. Whoso hath, and now consecrateth to this great work, to him shall be given . . . to him . . . who is wanting in disposition to render back to the author of all blessing, from him the Spirit departeth, and shall be taken even that which he hath."

There were, however, as we learn from T. S. Hiatt, who himself joined the infant community in December, 1851, dissensions and money losses at the outset, and perhaps some revolt of the natural man against the command to divest himself of his worldly goods; and the community within a few months was in danger of breaking up. But in the early summer of the following year Harris again joined them, bringing with him more persons of property, and the scheme was resuscitated. Another manifesto from the controlling intelligence was now issued through the organism of the faithful medium:—

"Dear Brethren,—The especially appointed and commissioned spirits, through whom superior wisdom has approached and instructed mortals, dictate unto you the present epistle in the light of understanding, in the purpose of council, and in the desire of

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harmonious interprocedure of love. They review their works, declare their directed purposes, and seek to guide your feet in the way of peace.

* * * * * *

"The Circle of Apostles and Prophets do finally declare that in the eighth month of the year 1851, common diurnal time, the Word of the Lord came unto them, commanding disclosure of His most holy will concerning the establishment of a terrestrial centre for the unfolding of His heavenly kingdom, and a refuge for His obedient people . . . .

"In obedience to our instructions, we guided James, the medium, into the place appointed, and have established upon this mountain the standard of the cross, as a sign for the gathering of the obedient people.

"In further fulfilment of our charge, we have guided Thomas, the medium, to the appointed place, and have disclosed unto his mind full evidence of his associate medium's faithfulness in all the work given unto him to do; and that also all discord within the boundaries of the place appointed is caused by the presence of the unsanctified, and subsides with their removal therefrom.

"Having thus guided the vehicles of communication to the place directed by His most holy will, and united them thereupon, the Spirit, who deviseth and establisheth the Redeeming Procedure, issueth commandment unto His messengers to resume the disclosure of His truth without delay, that His name may thereby be glorified, His people instructed and comforted, and His compassionate and lovingkindness, in accordance with the purpose in the consummation of His procedure, be manifest unto the earth and the inhabitants thereof.

"Dictated at Mountain Cove,
"Fifth Month, 1852."

The dissensions and pecuniary difficulties, however, still continued; some of the community left, others were banished by command; and the movement seems to have died out early in 1853, Harris then returning to his ordinary work of lecturing, writing inspirational poems, etc., for a time. The impulse for community founding, however, was strong in him, and some years later found more complete and permanent expression.[1]

[1] The history of the Mountain Cove Community is taken from the account given by Capron, *Modern Spiritualism*, chap. vi. See also Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 568–74; Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *History*, pp. 207–17; *The Spirit World*, vol. ii. pp. 86, 122, 141, 169; vol. iii. pp. 29, 105.

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THE NEW MOTOR.

In April, 1854, S. B. Brittan, the editor of the *Spiritual Telegraph*, announced in the columns of that paper that the "Association of Electricians" had given directions through the organism of Brother Spear for the construction of a machine which was to embody the principle of a new motive power. Later we learn that the machine was to be so constructed as to draw upon the great reservoir of the magnetic life in Nature and to be "self-generative." All so-called electro-magnetic machines hitherto constructed by mostly human agencies derived their power, it was pointed out, from sources which were artificial and easily exhausted. But the new motive power—like the human body with which it was compared by its framers—was to be a living organism, quickened into life by an indwelling spiritual principle. The analogy with the human body was developed in an almost incredible manner. Whilst yet the new motive power stood in its wooden shed at High Rock, near Lynn Mass., as inert mass of zinc and copper, it was announced in a beautiful vision to Mrs. ——, a respectable married lady, who numbered herself among Spear's disciples, that to her it was appointed to be "the Mary of a New Dispensation." The word later came to her through the mouth of Brother Spear that she should go to High Rock, to where the New Motor stood. There she endured pangs as of parturition for two hours; "her outer perception was clear and distinct that through those agonising throes the most interior and refined elements of her spiritual being were imparted to and absorbed by" the machine. At the end of two hours there were indications of life in the metallic framework, "at first perceptible only to her keenly sensitive touch, but visible ultimately in movement and pulsation to the eyes of all." Then followed for some weeks on the part of Mrs. —— "a process analogous to that of nursing," by which it was claimed that the life of "the new-born child," the "Physical Saviour of the race," was cherished and sustained. Thereupon the enthusiastic disciples hailed the New Motor as "the Art of all Arts, the Science of all Sciences, the New Messiah, God's Last Best Gift to Man." A. J. Davis went down in May, 1854, to see the wonder. He was "impressed" to report that Spear was undoubtedly honest, and the design of the mechanism undoubtedly the work of spirits, on the ground apparently that it couldn't have been produced by Spear

[1] See *ante*, p. 275.

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it of his own head. Further, he was impressed to declare at "the positive and negative—the male and female—laws of Nature were very truthfully divulged and prescribed theoretically"; yet that in practice the thing had not moved, and obviously could not move, and that if it did move it couldn't so much as turn a coffee-mill. The seer's conclusion on the whole matter was that some mechanically minded spirits, of good intentions and "correct philosophy," but "deficient in the practical knowledge of the means to consummate its actualisation," were conducting experiments at friend Spear's expense, to the extent of some two thousand dollars, and that, in the interest of all parties, the less said about the matter the better. Others of the more level-headed Spiritualists reported to the same effect.

The end of the New Motor, as we learn from a letter written by J. M. Spear, came a few months later. The machine had been moved to Randolph (N.Y.), that it might have the advantage of more terrestrial electricity. One night the neighbours arose, broke into the shed, and smashed up the machinery. Spear finds comfort in the reflection that Garrison was mobbed and Birney's printing-press had been thrown into the river.[1]

But the main body of Spiritualists had as little sympathy with such movements as those which culminated at Mountain Cove or High Rock as they had with the propaganda of free love. It was not merely that they were repelled by their extravagance and absurdity; they resented not less the claims to exclusive inspiration put forward; for the special characteristic of the Spiritualist movement from the beginning has been its democratic character. There has been neither recognised leader nor authoritative statement of creed. This characteristic, again, gave breadth, tolerance, and expansiveness to the movement, which made it unique amongst religious revivals, and rendered it possible for the new belief to combine with almost any pre-existing system of doctrine. As a matter of fact, many persons appear to have found a belief in Spiritualism not incompatible with dogmatic Christianity. As already shown, for instance, in chapter v., the spirit communications published by J. A. Gridley explicitly defended, against the attacks of A. J. Davis, the genuineness of the biblical miracles and the verity of the Christian doctrines; and Spiritualists in general

[1] For the history of the New Motor, see Capron, *Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 220 *et seq.*; *The Educator*, pp. 238–57; and *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. p. 489, vol. v. pp. 39, 182, 342, vol. vi. p. 397.

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showed no hostility to the Christian faith. The new ide were in themselves so engrossing that the devotees rare came into active and conscious collision with older syste of belief. A partial exception is no doubt to be found in t writings of Andrew Jackson Davis. Davis set himself explain the futility of the Christian scheme in the light the New Revelation; he maintained that Jesus was a m inspired from the same universal source as himself, and th his wisdom had in some respects been greatly overrate that the Christian miracles were instances of the operati of the same natural laws now responsible for the Spiritualistic phenomena; and he takes occasion to point out that th evidence for some of the biblical marvels which did no readily lend themselves to this interpretation was faulty an insufficient.[1] Further, he taught that—all evil being bu good in the making—there is no hell and no personal devil, and that in the temptation, therefore, Jesus was assailed merely by the promptings of his own lower nature.[2]

But the tone of hostility towards Christianity adopted by A. J. Davis was frequently deprecated by his contemporaries, and found few imitators. Writers like Sunderland, Edmonds, Hare, and Brittan, whilst not admitting the uniquely divine nature of Jesus, or the exclusive inspiration of the Bible, seem to have regarded the Spiritualist utterances as supplementing and fulfilling the earlier revelation.[3] The essentially democratic character of the movement, however, renders it a task of some difficulty to define its creed. Creed, no doubt, in the sense in which the word is understood by the Christian Churches, it had none. But, nevertheless, certain factors can be recognised which went to make up a general body of more or less defined belief. The older mesmeric doctrines were represented abundantly; there was a strong Swedenborgian element, whose chief spokesmen were such men as Joel Tiffany, W. S. Courtney, and W. M. Fernald; there was an element of newer mysticism, represented mainly by Davis, and pre-eminently in his later years by Thomas Lake Harris. Of the universalist contingent, Brittan, the editor or co-editor successively of the *Univercœlum*, the *Shekinah*, and the *Spiritual Telegraph*, was the most conspicuous exponent.

[1] *Events in the Life of a Seer*, pp. 235 *et seq.*

[2] *Great Harmonia*, vol. ii. p. 347.

[3] See Sunderland, in *Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 45; Edmonds and Dexter, *Spiritualism*, vol. i. pp. 209, 216, 384; Hare, *Experimental Investigation*, p. 427; Brittan, in *Telegraph Papers*, vol. ii., p. 454.

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The chief negative aspects, as judged from a Christian standpoint, of the resulting body of beliefs are thus summed up by Beecher:—

"Rejecting the Bible as *authority*, claiming for all men inspiration in common with Christ and the Apostles, and of the same kind; regarding sin as immaturity of development, eschewing all received ideas of a fall of angels and men from original holiness, of total depravity, atonement, regeneration, pardon, etc., the system is in its last analysis, though but half-developed, a polytheistic pantheism, disguising under the name of spirit a subtle but genuine materialism."[1]

The one positive tenet common to all Spiritualists was the possibility of communion with the spirits of deceased men and women. But associated with this belief almost universally was the conception of the other life as one of limitations and conditions not unlike the present; a world of orderly and continuous progression. This conception implicitly carried with it the negation of the distinctive Christian doctrines, as commonly understood—the scheme of redemption, of heaven and hell, and of a last judgment. The vision of the other life was developed and embellished by each believer according to his individual prepossessions and environment. But the anæmic optimism of Davis pervaded the whole. And there was a widespread belief, having its roots deep in older mysticisms, in a succession of concentric zones or spheres arranged in groups of seven, which were commonly conceived as having a definite location in space, insomuch that Hare tells us that he learnt from the spirits that the bands seen through a telescope over the equatorial regions of Jupiter are actually the spiritual spheres of that planet;[2] and Gridley gives the exact dimensions of the various terrestrial circles, the first being 5,000 miles and the sixth 30,000 from the earth's surface.[3]

In fact, the common conception of spirit was of a more refined matter. Thus Hare was expressly taught by the "spirits" that there were peculiar elementary principles out of which spiritual bodies were constructed, which were analogous to, but not identical with, material elements; that the spirits have bodies, with a circulation and respiratory apparatus; that they breathe a gaseous or ethereal matter, which is also

[1] *Review of the Spiritual Manifestations.* London, 1853, p. 79.
[2] *Experimental Investigation*, p. 120.
[3] *Astounding Facts*, etc., p. 96.

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inspired, together with atmospheric oxygen, by men, bea
and fishes—the spiritual gas being especially necessary
the latter class of animals.[1] Ballou, in a summary of
theory of Spiritualists, tells us that matter and spirit
both eternally coexistent substances, the lowest grade
spirit being always more subtle, elastic, and penetrative th
the most ethereal matter. This "subtle ethero-spiritu
substance" he calls "Spiricity."[2] Dr. Ashburner, in
letter quoted in the English edition of Ballou's wor
defines a train of thought as "currents of globules of highl
refined matter."[3] Capron and Barron, in their *History*
speak of "the more refined substance to which we giv
the name of spirit." And W. S. Courtney, one of th
most thoughtful of the earlier writers, quotes from the
Univercœlum—

"the following illustration of the only difference between matter and spirit. 'If you fill a hogshead with cannon balls, there will be left large interstices between them, which can be filled with musket balls, still leaving interstices between the musket balls which can be filled with shot, those interstices again with sand, those again with water, those again with air, the air with light, the light with electricity, the electricity with magnetism, etc.' We might pursue," Courtney writes, "the interiorising process, and say the magnetism is pervaded by a principle of sensation, sensation by intelligence, intelligence by love, etc., thus showing the difference between spirit and matter to be only a difference in degree of development or refinement—the higher associating with, infilling, and actuating the lower, and holding it, as it were, in consistency."[5]

But it is needless to multiply quotations and authorities. The unity of substance and the omnipotence of electricity—"salvation by electricity," as James happily terms it—were the two keys which for the early Spiritualist unlocked the doors of all knowledge in heaven or on earth. Of the nature of God, or other transcendental mysteries, the spirits have nothing to say. The world they present to our view is a strictly material world, developing by processes of material evolution towards an unknown end. There is no mystery about their teaching. Spirit is only attenuated matter; the other world a counterpart of this; the living universe an endless series of beings like ourselves. Their view, in short,

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 116–18.
[2] *Modern Spirit Manifestations*, pp. 3, 4.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 144. [4] Page 8.
[5] *The Spirit World*, vol. ii. p. 42.

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epresents the product of common sense, the common sense of the ordinary uninstructed man, acting upon the facts, or rather his interpretation of the facts, presented to him. Given his interpretation as correct, the inferences which he drew, the cosmological scheme which he constructed on the lines of his own parochial experience, follow inevitably. There is rarely any hint of deeper insight. The problems of Space and Time, of Knowing and Being, of Evil and Good, of Will and Law, are hardly even recognised. Common sense is not competent for these questions; and in so far as the Spiritualist scheme fails to take account of them, it falls short of being a Theology, or even an adequate Cosmology. But such as it is, though it makes no appeal to the higher imagination and ignores the deeper mysteries of life, it has for nearly two generations satisfied the intellectual needs and the emotional cravings of hundreds of thousands of votaries. And its followers can boast that throughout that period they have shown a sympathy for opinions differing from their own, and a tolerance for their opponents, unique in the history of sects called religious.

The annals of Spiritualism, up to 1855 at any rate, are filled almost exclusively with accounts of phenomena and opinions. Of history, in any other sense, there is little to record. The new sect certainly grew rapidly in numbers, though there are no statistics, and it is difficult to find an estimate which is even professedly based on anything but conjecture. Hammond speaks of two thousand writing mediums alone in 1852;[1] Partridge, writing in 1854, says that Spiritualists in America numbered over a million;[2] Tallmadge, a few weeks later, says two millions;[3] Tiffany, in 1855, writes, "they now number millions";[4] whilst a few years later, at a Catholic convention, it was stated, "on accurate and reliable information," that the Spiritualists numbered eleven millions.[5] But all these statements are mere guesses, inspired by the hopes or fears of their authors. Even the estimate adopted by the North American Reviewer, though at any rate disinterested, cannot safely be regarded as presenting an approximation to the truth.

But whatever their actual numbers, it is certain that the

[1] *The Pilgrimage of Thomas Paine* (Preface).
[2] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iv. p. 270.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 531.
[4] *Spiritualism Explained*, p. 152.
[5] Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *History*, p. 273.

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men and ardent angels in the Press; that its followers conferences, services, and seances in almost every town importance in the United States; that they supported periodicals of their own, and organised themselves into societies—Harmonial Brotherhood, Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge, and the like; and that, generally, they carried on an active propaganda by their lectures, publications, writings, and their seances.

For the most part this propaganda, save for the accusations of demoniac possession levelled at them from the various pulpits, seems to have proceeded peacefully enough. In a few instances, however, Spiritualism made its appearance before the law. One of the most noted cases at the time was that of Abby Warner. One Dr. Underhill (afterwards historian of Fort Fox) had on Christmas Eve, 1852, company with a medium named Abby Warner, attended service at the Episcopal Church in Massillon, Ohio. Soon after the service had commenced loud raps were heard. The officiating clergyman requested that the noise might cease, but the sounds shortly recommenced, and became louder than before. They apparently proceeded from the part of the building where Abby Warner was seated—and, indeed, it was rumoured that the spirits had directed Abby to go to church on purpose that the manifestations might be produced in so favourable a theatre. Abby was accordingly arrested and tried on a charge of disturbing a religious meeting. On behalf of the defendant it was pleaded that though similar sounds occurred in her presence, they were not made by her conscious agency nor under her control. In the result the evidence proved insufficient to locate the sounds with exactness, or to fix the responsibility of their production, and the accused was discharged.[1] The Spiritualists, somewhat illogically, claimed the result as a triumph, and continued to take credit, on behalf of the spirits, for the manifestation. A year later Dr. Underhill brought an action for libel in connection with the case, but the jury disagreed.[2]

Of other legal proceedings the Eddy case was the most noteworthy. Insanity at this time was frequently charged as a result of belief in Spiritualism. And there was some justification for the charge. Andrew Jackson Davis and other Spiritualists admit that cases of insanity had

[1] *History*, by Mrs. Hardinge Britten, pp. 299, 300.
[2] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. iii. p. 361.

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urred in their ranks, and formidable statistics are quoted some writers.[1]

n any case, the matter is one of but little significance. ligious mania is a well-recognised type, and no doubt any persons lost their reason over spirit-rapping who might nerwise have gone mad over the doctrine of hell-fire. mething more than newspaper reports or unsifted statistics om asylums is needed to establish a general tendency on e part of Spiritualists to lunacy. One case of the kind, wever, excited much interest. A man of some wealth amed Ira B. Eddy, of Chicago, started, apparently under piritual direction, a bank in that city in conjunction with me other persons. His brother, D. C. Eddy, fearing that ra would dissipate his substance, took the case into court, nd, on the plea that Ira was incapable of managing his own affairs, was appointed conservator of the estates. Some of the partners appear to have resisted the order of the court, and legal proceedings followed. Later, D. C. Eddy, in a somewhat high-handed manner, had his brother removed forcibly in the charge of some medical men to a private asylum in another State, where he was incarcerated for a week. The postmaster and other prominent citizens of Chicago protested against this arbitrary proceeding; the question was tried, and, as his incarceration appears to have been illegal and no evidence was forthcoming that his detention in the Asylum was justified in the interest of society, Ira Eddy was released, and the matter ended.[2]

There are other indications of the distrust and dislike not unnaturally inspired in various quarters by the new movement. Thus so early as June, 1851, the New Hampshire House of Representatives adopted a resolution, "that the Committee on the Judiciary inquire into the expediency of making provision by law for protecting the people of the State against imposition and injury by persons pretending to hold intercourse with departed spirits, and report by bill or otherwise."[3] This particular resolution appears to have borne no fruit; but some nine years later the Legislature of Alabama passed an Act prohibiting public spiritualistic manifestations under a penalty of five hundred dollars.[4]

[1] See Davis, *The Present Age*, pp. 245–6, 252; *Spirit World*, vol. iii. pp. 15, 55; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. pp. 38, 159, vol. v. pp. 100, 186, 410; and Mattison, *Spirit-Rappings Unveiled*, pp. 158, 162. Mattison gives returns from various asylums showing ninety alleged cases.

[2] Mattison, *op. cit.*, p. 155; *Telegraph Papers*, vol. i. p. 437, vol. ii. p. 10.

[3] *Spirit World*, vol. iii. p. 3.

[4] Mrs. Hardinge Britten, *History*, p. 416.

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Spiritualism once in these early years came prominently before the Legislature of the United States, by means of a Memorial to Congress. The Memorial begins by representing "that certain physical and mental phenomena, of questionable origin and mysterious import, have of late occurred in this country and in almost all parts of Europe, and that the same are now so prevalent, especially in the northern, middle, and western sections of the Union, as to engross a large share of the public attention." After briefly describing the various phenomena, and stating that two general hypotheses obtained with regard to their cause, viz. the spiritualistic and what may be called the odylo-magnetic, the Memorial continues:—

"While your memorialists cannot agree upon this question, they beg leave, most respectfully, to assure your Honorable Body they nevertheless most cordially concur in the opinion that *the alleged phenomena do really occur*, and that their mysterious origin, peculiar nature, and important bearing upon the interests of mankind demand for them a patient, thorough, and scientific investigation.

"It cannot reasonably be denied that the various phenomena to which the Memorial refers are likely to produce important and lasting results, permanently affecting the physical condition, mental development, and moral character of a large number of the American people. It is obvious that these occult powers do influence the essential principles of health and life, of thought and action, and hence they may be destined to modify the conditions of our being, the faith and philosophy of the age, and the government of the World."

Finally the Memorial prayed for the appointment of a scientific commission of investigation. The Memorial, which bore over 13,000 signatures, was presented to Congress in April, 1854. The introducer, one General Shields, did not conceive it to be any part of his duty to attempt to move Congress to accede to the prayer of the petitioners, and, after some rather cheap jests at its expense, the Memorial was ordered to lie on the table.

In the same month Spiritualism met with another rebuff. Hare, at a meeting of the American Scientific Association in Washington, read to the Convention an invitation from the Spiritualists of Washington to attend a lecture to be given by T. L. Harris. The invitation was laid upon the table.[1]

It remains only to add that the propaganda, even at this

[1] *Telegraph Papers*, vol. v. p. 112.

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early period, was not confined to the American continent. At least two missionaries, Mrs. Hayden, wife of the sometime editor of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and D. D. Hume visited England before 1855 and helped to spread the new doctrines there. Of them and their doings we shall speak more later.

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